

Gold Coast Health

Clinician Researcher FELLOWSHIPS

2025 Guidelines

Introduction

Clinician researchers are well placed to identify issues and research opportunities of great relevance and need to our patients and their health care delivery. The Clinician Researcher Fellowships (the Fellowships) are available to Gold Coast Health clinical staff, providing an opportunity to develop their clinical research careers while also actively contributing to high-quality research, supporting its translation and contributing to improved healthcare delivery.

Through the opportunity to develop career pathways the program aims to attract and retain skilled and promising staff and to support areas of existing strength towards national and international recognition.

The Fellowships will provide clinical staff with the opportunity to pursue research, whilst continuing to work clinically. The Fellowship program will be open to staff across all clinical disciplines and will provide up to 0.4 FTE of three years' duration for early career clinician researchers. Whilst not essential, a Research Higher Degree (RHD) (or significant progress towards a RHD) will be considered highly in the assessment of applications. To be eligible, applicants must hold a clinical position of at least 0.4FTE at Gold Coast Health for the duration of their Fellowship.

Up to two Fellowships will be awarded (if suitable based on merit) with a maximum of one for Senior Medical Officers.

Program Objectives

Gold Coast Health is committed to setting a forward-looking research agenda which embraces novel approaches to diagnostics and therapeutics, as well as systematically evaluating our clinical practice and the implementation of new knowledge to deliver world class healthcare.

The Gold Coast Health [Research Roadmap 2025-2028](#) outlines a vision that our research transforms health, with our purpose to advance high-quality research to address our health priorities, leading to improved patient care. The Fellowships will enable our clinicians to develop a program of research aligned to the vision and purpose of the Roadmap and the priorities of the broader Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service [Strategic Plan 2024-2028](#) (G28), designed to concurrently advance their research and clinical practice careers.

The key objectives of the Clinician Researcher Fellowships program are to:

- Support and develop research excellence in early career clinicians who are embedded within Gold Coast Health.
- Promote enhanced opportunities for diverse career pathways by attracting and retaining our early career clinician researchers.
- Expand early career clinician --researcher capacity in a supportive and appropriately supervised, research-enabling environment.
- Enable capacity building, early career clinician researcher mentoring, and the continued development of leadership and supervision capabilities.

Applications are invited from clinicians across all healthcare disciplines, including allied health services, health sciences, dental, medical, and nursing and midwifery health care professionals.

Key dates	
15 September 2025	Applications Open
9 November 2025	Applications Close
14 November – 28 November 2025	Reviewer assessments
02 February 2026	Applicants notified of progress of their submission. Shortlisted applicants invited to interview.
10 February 2026	Interviews (shortlisted applicants)
23 February 2026	Shortlisted applicants notified of outcome following interview.
05 March 2026	Successful applicants announced at the 2026 Research Innovation and Transformation Showcase.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Applicant	Refers to the individual who is submitting the application.
Career disruption	A prolonged interruption to the ability to work due to pregnancy, illness/injury, carer responsibilities or other factors. The period of career interruption may be used to determine eligibility as an early career researcher and allow inclusion of additional track record information for assessment.
Clinician	A health professional with a recognised tertiary degree, with eligibility or membership with a relevant professional body.
Clinical duties	Refers to those duties undertaken by the applicant in the course of their employment as a clinician. These duties may be directly related to patient care or may include non-clinical duties such as administrative or management specialisation.
Research Higher Degree (RHD)	A post-graduate degree completed at a university or recognised training institution such as a Masters of Research (MRes), Master of Philosophy (MPhil) or Level 10 Doctoral Degree e.g. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), MD by Research.
Early Career Researcher	An Early Career Researcher (ECR) is defined as a clinician who is within 10 years of either being awarded a Research Higher Degree, such as a MRes, PhD, MD by Research or MPhil, or their first peer-reviewed publication where they are a listed author (any order), whichever occurred first.
Fellow	For the purposes of this document, Fellow will refer to a successful Fellowship applicant.

Mentor	Refers to an adequately experienced individual who will provide advice, guidance, and support to the Fellow for their long-term research development.
Relative to opportunity	Any personal or professional circumstances affecting research productivity. These circumstances will be considered in the assessment of track record.
Supervisor	Refers to an individual nominated to supervise the Fellow whilst undertaking their clinician researcher duties. The supervisor must be an accredited PhD supervisor or an established researcher with clinical and/or academic supervisory experience.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for a Clinician Researcher Fellowship, applicants must:

- Be employed in a clinical role with Gold Coast Health for the duration of the Fellowship, appointed to a minimum of 0.4 FTE clinician duties, as per the definition above. The total Gold Coast Health appointment must not exceed 1.0 FTE.

Note: the total concurrent employment arrangement with Gold Coast Health does not have to equate to 1.0 FTE

- Be an early career researcher as per the definition above. Whilst a Research Higher Degree is not essential, it will be highly regarded as part of the assessment. Career disruption will be considered for applicant eligibility.
- Nominate two or more supervisors, at least one being an academic (university) supervisor.
- Provide a proposal to develop and undertake a body of research aligned with the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service [Strategic Plan 2024 - 2028 \(G28\)](#) and [Local Area Needs Assessment](#) to be undertaken at, or significantly associated with, Gold Coast Health facilities and/or research which involves preventative or community work that will directly impact Gold Coast Health service delivery and the wider community.
- Provide a clear account of how the Fellowship will be used to further their own career plans and build broader research capacity.
- Include a signed Letter of Support from the relevant Head of Department endorsing the application, and with a commitment to support a reduction of clinical duties within six (6) months of acceptance of the Fellowship Agreement Terms and Conditions and Clinician Researcher Fellowship arrangement.
- Submit the application using the requisite online application form by the advertised closing date (*no extension requests will be considered*)
- Upload all requisite documents according to content and formatting requirements
- Ensure that all requisite certifications and signatures are obtained on the certification page of the application form. These will include:
 - Certification and signature of Applicant.
 - Certification and signature of Head of Department.
 - Certification and signature of Primary Supervisor.
 - Certification and signature of Secondary Supervisor/s.
 - Certification and signature of Executive Director.
- Upload a copy of the certification page, with all requisite signatures, as one document using the online platform.
- Shortlisted applicants must be available to attend the **face-to-face** panel interview session on the 10th February 2026.

Terms of Funding

- Fellowships will provide up to part-time (0.4 FTE annually but not less than 0.2 FTE) for three-years.
- Fellows will either be concurrently appointed to a temporary part-time position at the level of their current substantive clinician appointment within Gold Coast Health or funds transferred to their existing position to enable up to 0.4 FTE of time to be allocated to the Fellowship.
- Fellows will complete a regular six-monthly check-in with the Gold Coast Health Chair of Research and Snr. Director of Research with an Annual Progress Report to update the Research Office.
- Fellows are expected to provide evidence that they have applied for external research funding during their Fellowship.
- Fellows will develop an individualised research training plan on commencement of their Fellowship. It is expected that this plan demonstrates how a Fellow intends on participating in research training e.g., as provided through academic partners, and informed by a baseline of training already completed.
- It is a requirement that Fellows complete Good Clinical Practice (GCP) training. Certificate of completion will be required prior to disbursement of funding.
- Fellows will receive the following:
 - A Letter of Confirmation
 - A Fellowship Agreement to be signed by the Fellow, outlining the Terms and Conditions of the award, including compliance with all relevant policies, procedures legislation and regulatory frameworks relating to the conduct and management of research.
 - A Confirmation of Fellowship Arrangement form to be signed by the Fellow and their Director.
- Fellows must take up the appointment within six (6) months of acceptance of the Terms and conditions of the Fellowship Agreement and Fellowship arrangement, except where granted special permission to do otherwise.
- Fellows should give early consideration to any back-fill requirements to ensure these are covered by commencement of the agreed Fellowship term.
- It is the Fellow's responsibility to ensure full ethical approval (e.g., Human Research Ethics Committee approval) and governance (site-specific authorisation) is received for all research undertaken during the Fellowship.
- The Fellow will be responsible for demonstrating adherence to the research plan outlined in the approved application, and continuation of Fellowship funding is contingent upon successful progress toward completion of these activities. Fellows will be monitored via the check-in and their Annual Progress Report.
- Where the application includes a proposed collaboration with an Academic partner, the applicant must also demonstrate agreement from the academic partner to meet the minimum expectations in Fellowship support, including both in-kind and infrastructure support.
- It is a condition of the Fellowship Agreement that the Fellow will cooperate in any public relations requests or forums to promote research including the annual Research, Innovation and Transformation Showcase, Research Grand Rounds, communications, and Gold Coast Health Advancing Research Alliance.

Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed by the Clinician Researcher Fellowships Panel (the Panel) using the following criteria: *(a [rubric](#) is provided to assist applicants when addressing the assessment criteria)*

Clinician Researcher Fellowship Criteria:	Weighting
Research Potential – the degree to which the applicant has demonstrated an aptitude for research through their track record (e.g., competitive grants and peer-reviewed publications) and/or a commitment to the application of research in their clinical field (relative to opportunity). Potential to further develop their research career and level of ongoing support for research time beyond the Fellowship program as outlined in a letter of support and description of how the Fellowship will springboard their career.	30%
Research Significance – the program proposal quality, alignment with the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service Strategic Plan 2024-2028 (G28) and potential to impact Gold Coast Health’s service delivery and wider community.	30%
Research Feasibility – of the program of work including how they will balance clinical duties with the research program, opportunities for new collaboration internally and externally to support the work.	20%
Research Environment – including the team, supervision, potential to build broader research capacity across Gold Coast Health, health service support and consumer engagement.	20%

External and Panel Reviews

Two external reviewers and members of the Fellowship Review Panel will review each application. The Gold Coast Health Chair of Research will chair the Fellowship Review Panel which will include clinical researchers, members of academic partner organisations and a consumer representative.

Each application will be scored (1-7) under each of the four criteria above and then scores converted to a criterion score (between 20-30% for each) and totaled to 100.

Reviewers will be requested to score each of the 4 criteria as below.

Grade	Category	Description
7	Outstanding	Fully addresses all assessment criteria to an outstanding and exceptional by nationally competitive standard and presents an outstanding argument for selection.
6	Excellent	Addresses all outlined assessment criteria to an excellent standard and makes a compelling argument for selection.
5	Very good	Addresses most outlined assessment criteria to a very good (above average to high) standard and makes a strong case for consideration.
4	Good	Meets the outlined assessment criteria to an acceptable standard and presents a sound proposal for consideration.
3	Below average	Addresses only some of the outlined assessment criteria and the case for consideration is weak or poorly formulated.
2	Marginal	Does not sufficiently address the outlined assessment criteria and presents no case for consideration.
1	Unsatisfactory	Does not address any of the selection criteria and is not satisfactory for consideration.

Following assessment by the Panel, short-listed applicants will be recommended and invited for interview. Those applicants who are unsuccessful and do not progress to an interview will receive written (e-mail) confirmation from the Research Office not less than one-week prior to the scheduled interview date.

Following decision by the Fellowship Review Panel – the Study, Education, Research, Trust Account (SERTA) committee will make a recommendation to the Executive Director of Digital, Transformation and Research and the Chief Financial Officer. The Executive Research Committee will be provided with the decision for information. As indicated above, up to two Fellowships will be awarded (if suitable based on merit) with a maximum of one for Senior Medical Officers.

Interviews

Date	Tuesday 10 February 2026
Duration	30 minutes (must arrive 15 minutes prior to prepare)
Location	Gold Coast Health, PED Building.

Invitation

- Invitations will be received by phone and email not less than one week prior to the scheduled interview.
- Applicants are requested to invite their Head of Department, Clinical Supervisor or Executive delegate to attend.

Acceptances

- Timeslots will be allocated, and applicants are expected to be available at the requested time.
- Acceptance must be confirmed by return e-mail. A request for a change in time only may be made. Requests are not guaranteed and will only be made subject to panel availability.
- Should an applicant decline or be unavailable to interview, they will not be eligible for the current round and the next-highest ranked applicant may be invited to interview.

The Interview

- Attendance at the interview, to be held at Gold Coast University Hospital, is required in-person
- The interview session will be attended by the Chair of Research and members of the Fellowship review panel, the applicant and their Head of Department or delegate (if unavailable).
- The Head of Department or Executive delegate attending the interview will be asked to speak to the level of potential impact, project feasibility and support of the applicant.

Outcomes and Award

- The Fellowship panel will determine a recommendation following the interview.
- The Fellowship panel will then prepare a recommendation to the Gold Coast Health Study, Education, Research Trust Account (SERTA) Committee with a final decision by the Executive Director, Digital, Transformation and Research and the Chief Financial Officer. The Executive Research Committee will be provided with the outcome of the recommendations for information.
- Successful candidates will receive a tentative offer and will be requested to undertake formal negotiations with their proposed academic partner and confirm arrangements with their Head of Department and Executive Director.

Outcomes are anticipated to be announced 05 March 2026, at the Research, Innovation and Transformation Showcase.

Online Application Form (Outline)

How to Apply

Applications for the Clinician Researcher Fellowships must be completed online via the SmartyGrants online platform.

<https://healthqld.smartygrants.com.au/CRF-2025>

SmartyGrants Help Guides

Help Guide for Applicants

<https://applicanthehelp.smartygrants.com.au/help-guide-for-applicants/>

Applicant FAQ's

<https://applicanthehelp.smartygrants.com.au/applicant-faq%27s/>

Application Form

The following is an outline only of questions which will appear in the online form. Prior to commencing the application in SmartyGrants, we recommend that applicants preview or download a PDF copy of the online form to obtain further detail on word counts, CVs and other requirements.

Page 1. Introduction and Important Information

This section outlines requirements regarding eligibility and supporting documentation for upload into the completed application form and includes key dates for the application process.

Page 2. Applicant Details and Research Potential

You will be asked to provide your contact details, employment status, clinical registration or professional certification and PhD details.

You will also be asked to provide details of any circumstances or a career disruption that has affected your capacity to undertake work within the last 10 years..

Research Track Record

You will be asked to describe your current research achievements and their impact in your clinician researcher career. (300 word limit)

You will be asked how you have demonstrated your ability to generate and apply evidence within your field into clinical practice. (300 word limit)

Please note: The mandatory file names for all uploaded documents, corresponds to the application ID automatically generated in SmartyGrants upon commencement of your application.

#1 Upload: CV/Resume including details of research projects, grant funding and publications

Formatting requirements: PDF only, six pages maximum

Mandatory File Name: CRF-2025-XXX_Resume.pdf

Page 3. Research Significance

You will be asked to respond to the following questions:

NHMRC Research Area and Group

Select relevant Broad Research Area, Group and Field of Research (FOR)

Title:

Provide the title of your research program proposal

What is the vision of your Fellowship research program and describe how it aligns with the Gold Coast Health Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028 (G28)? (400 word limit)

Background and Rationale (400 word limit)

Describe a specific issue or problem you want to address and how your research program will contribute to the current evidence base.

Aims and Objectives (300 word limit)

You will be asked to describe the aims and objectives of your research program.

Research Plan (1000 word limit)

This section should include a plan of the proposed research activity (e.g., design, methods, participants, sample size, procedures/data analyses plan etc.)

Potential Significance and Impact (300 word limit)

Describe the potential significance and impact for the Gold Coast Health community and more broadly at a national and/or international level and how you plan to translate findings locally and beyond.

Page 4. Research Feasibility

Feasibility of the Program of Work (200 word limit)

You will be required to describe the feasibility of the program of work and how you will balance clinical duties to fit with the program.

Collaborative Opportunities (200 word limit)

You will be asked to describe the opportunities for new collaborations both internally and externally to support the program.

Milestones and Timelines

You are required to outline a timeline for key milestones in your research program. A Gantt chart template is provided to assist with completion of milestone timelines.

2 Upload: Proposal Supporting Documents

Formatting Requirements: PDF only. References 1 page max. Images, graphs or graphics 1 page max. File name: CRF-2025-XXX_ Proposal Supporting Document.pdf

File name: CRF-2025-XXX_Gantt Chart.pdf

Page 5: Research Environment

You will be asked to provide a response to the following questions:

Capacity Building

1. How will this Fellowship advance your own research and clinical professional development? Provide examples of what specific skills and/or knowledge you hope to develop and how this will be achieved. (250 word limit)
2. How do you intend to use this Fellowship to actively build research capacity and collaborations within your clinical department across Gold Coast Health and the wider research and clinical community? (200 word limit)

Consumer Engagement (250 word limit)

How do you plan to incorporate consumer engagement within your research program throughout the Fellowship?

Health Services Support

Clinician Research Fellowships provide **salary support only**. Across the three years, you will be expected to undertake a body of research alongside your clinician duties, which may require access to specialised infrastructure, resources, advanced facilities or services.

1. You will be asked to describe the infrastructure and resources that will be available to you during this Fellowship both within Gold Coast Health or external, including potential team members and their roles (if known at this stage). (350 word limit)
2. How will you ensure that you will have access to the necessary infrastructure and resources across the duration of the Fellowship? Please include any contingency management strategies you may have for unsuccessful funding opportunities or deviations from your original plans. (350 word limit)

Page 6: Supervisors

You are required to nominate at least two appropriately qualified supervisors who will provide academic and/or clinical mentorship for the duration of the Fellowship. You must outline the role of the Supervisor/s and their contribution to the Fellowship and provide their Resume/CV. The Supervisor will also be required to certify and sign a copy of the application.

Head of Department – Letter of Support

You are required to provide a signed letter of support from your relevant Head of Department. The letter of support must, at a minimum, outline the commitment to support your reduction in clinician duties, and how you will be supported to maintain at least the minimum (0.4 FTE) clinician duties (after a Fellowship award) and integrate your research with clinical care. It must outline what supports will be available to you and provide an indication of the department level of support for this Fellowship application.

Academic or Professional Letter of Support

You may upload an additional letter of support. This may be from within Gold Coast Health, or it may be from an academic or industry partner. In all cases it must be pertinent and relevant to your Fellowship application.

3 Upload: Research Environment Supporting Documents

Formatting Requirements: must be uploaded as one PDF document, in the following order:

1. Resume/CV of Primary Supervisor/Mentor (six pages maximum)
2. Resume/CV of Secondary Supervisor/s (six pages maximum per supervisor)
3. Signed Letter of Support from Head/Director of Gold Coast Health Clinical Department/Unit (two pages maximum)
4. Optional signed Letter/s of support, where appropriate, from an Academic Partner or relevant collaborator (two pages maximum)

Mandatory File Name: CRF-2025-XXX_ Research Environment Supporting Documents.pdf

Page 7: Certification and Signatures

The certification page is where the Applicant, Supervisor/s, Head of Department and Executive Director are required to acknowledge (tick) all certification statements and sign the application.

4 Upload: Full Application and Certification

Formatting requirements: All requisite signatures. All statements certified (ticked). PDF only

Must be uploaded as ONE document, containing all requisite signatures

Mandatory File Name: CRF-2025-XXX_Certification.pdf

Page 8: Feedback

On this page you will be asked to tell us how you heard about the Clinician Researcher Fellowship program and any feedback you have on the application process.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure enough time is allowed for obtaining signatures. For example, for an Executive Director's signature, you will need to allow enough time for them to receive, review, sign and return the application to you using their usual administrative methods. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure appropriate and realistic timelines are left to secure the relevant signatures taking into consideration public holidays and planned leave for delegates.

Late applications will not be accepted, including those awaiting final signature.