

## NIHR INSIGHT Programme North West: Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the NIHR INSIGHT Programme?

In 2024, the NIHR awarded 3 years of funding for 12 regional programmes to showcase the range of ways research can be incorporated into health and care careers. This includes funding to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for up to 30 Masters Studentship opportunities, starting each year in autumn 2024, 2025 and 2026.

### What is a Studentship?

Studentships provide funding to cover the cost of tuition fees, and a maintenance Stipend to support living or salary costs. **Please Note:** Fees are paid at UK/Home rates only, international student rates are not covered by this programme. See below for further details.

### How do I apply?

Complete the application form and send to [INSIGHTNW@UCLan.ac.uk](mailto:INSIGHTNW@UCLan.ac.uk). You will need to demonstrate that you meet the eligibility criteria for the programme (see below for details), provide a personal statement detailing your reasons for wishing to undertake a Studentship, and, if successful, you will be invited to an interview.

The call for applications to Round 2 of recruitment opens on the 5<sup>th</sup> March 2025 and closes at 1pm on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

Feedback from the applications received in Round 1 is summarised in our Chair's Report.

### Where can I access support for my application?

We will hold regular drop-in sessions for potential applicants and Employers to ask any questions about individual circumstances. Details will be provided on our events page.

### What is the duration of Studentship funding?

- Full-time Studentships are tenable for up to 12 months.
- Part-time Studentships are tenable for up to 24 months.

### How much is the Stipend?

The Stipend amount is aligned with [UK Research and Innovation rates](#). For the academic year 2025-2026, the rate of the UKRI Stipend is £20,780 per annum (tax free).

**Please Note:** For those undertaking part-time study, the Stipend is the same and is paid pro-rata, 50% in year 1 and 50% in year 2.

## How will I receive the Stipend?

The Stipend can be paid in two ways:

### Option 1: Direct payment

The Stipend is paid directly to the INSIGHT Scholar by their host university (with whom they are completing the Masters programme). The Stipend is tax free and can be used to cover any loss of earnings encountered by reducing employment hours, or taking a break from employment to focus on full-time study. Payments are made in line with the host university's Stipend payment regulations (e.g., quarterly in advance), and may differ between institutions – for more information, please contact the Higher Education Institution (HEI) lead of the course you are interested in applying for (details can be found [here](#)). It is important to note that any additional paid work may affect tax-free status and it is the responsibility of the INSIGHT Scholar to ensure compliance with tax laws.

### Option 2: Salary Contribution

The Stipend is paid directly to the Employer to facilitate your release for study without affecting your contracted hours, in line with the INSIGHT Employer Agreement. Under the agreement, the Employer commits to:

- Retain the INSIGHT Scholar on their substantive contract of employment for the duration of the Studentship.
- Facilitate study release of 0.4FTE.
- Ensure working hours in line with INSIGHT requirements of  $\leq 0.6$ FTE (depending on mode of study – please see the “Can I work alongside a Studentship...” section for more details).

As **Option 2** may require approvals from multiple managers/departments, **we recommend discussions begin early in the application process.**

## Am I eligible to apply?

INSIGHT Studentships are designed for newly qualified, or early career professionals (health, care, social work, and public health) who have recently completed or are working towards their professional registration. This includes:

- Those who have recently graduated from a health and social care undergraduate programme, including those graduating in summer 2025.
- Those who have been working in practice for up to 5 years (since 2020). This can be calculated pro-rata for those who have had career breaks. **Please Note:** If you were educated, qualified and registered internationally before commencing practice in the UK, the years of experience must be calculated from the date of qualification in your home country.
- Registered, or working towards registration, with one of the eligible [NIHR approved regulatory bodies](#)
- Doctors and dentists are not eligible to apply to this funding programme.

We recognise that an individual may not easily fit into these categories, depending on their personal circumstances, for example if a career break has been taken. **If you are unsure whether you are eligible, please contact the INSIGHT engagement team for advice.**

Additionally, to be considered for a Studentship you must meet the university entry requirements for your chosen course of study, both first and second choices. Details of the entry requirements for each course can be found [here](#).

## Which professional groups are eligible for the INSIGHT Programme?

The INSIGHT Programme is available to registered, or soon to be registered, and regulated health and care professionals, excluding doctors or dentists. The full list of eligible professions can be found [here](#).

Psychology practitioners who are registered with a regulatory body are eligible for the INSIGHT Programme. Unfortunately, Psychology Well-Being Practitioners do not currently meet our criteria.

## Which Regulatory Body should I be registered, or working towards registration, with?

Applicants must be registered, or working towards registration, with one of the below Regulatory Bodies:

- Academy for Healthcare Science
- General Chiropractic Council
- General Optical Council
- General Osteopathic Council
- General Pharmaceutical Council
- Health and Care Professions Council
- Nursing and Midwifery Council
- Social Work England
- UK Public Health Register

## Do I have to work in the NHS to apply?

No, the INSIGHT Programme is not limited to those employed in the NHS.

## Do I have to live/work in the North West to apply?

The INSIGHT Programme North West is targeted to those who live and work in the region, details of the INSIGHT regions can be found [here](#). It is generally expected that you would apply in the region that you are living and working in, as the programme is built around the regional workforce. If, however, you are living on the border of one of the INSIGHT regions, you could apply to another region, particularly if travel to one of our HEIs would be a challenge, or where there is a specific course with a valid justification for your career development. Please contact the INSIGHT team to discuss.

## Who do I need to approach to gain support to submit my application, i.e. level of manager?

You will need to approach your line manager to support your application. If you are expecting your Employer to support time release facilitated by the Salary Contribution Stipend, you will likely require approvals from a variety of teams. You need to do this as soon as you can. We would strongly urge that you do this in a respectful manner, understanding the difficulties of service provision within the NHS at the moment. As such, we would suggest that you approach your manager with this opportunity as a request rather than a demand. You should also consider potential solutions for how your backfill may be covered, and not just expect your line manager to do this alone.

## What should I do if my manager does not support me?

If your manager does not support your application, then please contact the INSIGHT Team who will try to provide advocacy on your behalf.

## Which Universities are involved in the INSIGHT Programme North West?

We are a collaboration between four of the regions' research-intensive HEIs, led by the University of Central Lancashire, and including the University of Manchester, the University of Liverpool, and Lancaster University. Together with almost forty regional health and social care Employers, we aim to develop the research capacity of the regional workforce to meet the future needs of those who require our care and support.

## Which courses can I study?

The INSIGHT Programme North West Studentship can be used to support completion of one of six Masters degree programmes, delivered by our four partner universities. Details of courses eligible to be funded by the programme can be found [here](#).

## What if I am interested in more than one Masters degree programme?

Applications to all courses supported by the INSIGHT Programme North West will be co-ordinated in a single call for applications. As this is a highly competitive funding award, all applicants will be asked to provide their first and second choice of Masters course when they apply. In the event that an applicant is not successful in securing a place on their first choice of programme, they may be offered an opportunity on their second choice. We recommend all applicants to provide a second-choice option to inform recruitment panel decision processes.

## Can I study part-time?

To allow INSIGHT Award holders to simultaneously develop their profession-specific skills, both full- and part-time Studentships are available. We encourage INSIGHT Scholars to combine professional practice, and continued professional development, with part-time study wherever possible.

The INSIGHT Stipend can be paid directly to your Employer, as a 'Salary Contribution', to facilitate your release for study without affecting your contracted hours. **Please Note:** the Salary Contribution option requires the Employer to enter into an agreement with the host HEI. We recommend discussions regarding this option are started early in the application process.

## Can I work alongside a Studentship, and will this affect my Stipend?

**Full-time:** INSIGHT Scholars undertaking full-time study will be expected to complete their research Masters degree within 12-months, and will receive the full Stipend during this time period. It is therefore expected that no more than one day per week of additional paid employment be undertaken during this time to ensure successful completion of the programme.

**Part-time:** INSIGHT Scholars undertaking part-time study will be expected to complete their research Masters degree within 24-months, and the Stipend will be paid pro-rata over this period. Award holders studying part-time should undertake no more than 0.6FTE (three days) additional paid employment, to allow sufficient time to focus on their studies.

**Please Note:** As the Stipend is tax-free, undertaking additional paid work, over the hours details above may incur tax implications. It is the responsibility of the award holder to ensure they are complying with tax laws should additional paid work be completed in addition to the tax-free stipend payment.

## Can I take a sabbatical to study full-time?

This would be a personal choice and one which you would have to negotiate with your Employer. If you were to choose this route you could receive the Stipend via Option 1: Direct Payment (See the 'How will I receive the Stipend?' section for more details).

## Will my contractual arrangements with my Employer be affected if I were to be successful in my application?

The aim of the programme is for INSIGHT Scholars to undertake the Masters study whilst continuing in a professional role, and then return to that role. Line management support is critical. Your contractual arrangements will not be affected if you have the support of your line manager to take this opportunity.

## How will study affect my earning potential?

The below illustration is an example of your potential earnings, based on the agenda for change pay rate for a Band 5 NHS employee.

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NIHR INSIGHT Programme North West

### How will postgraduate study affect my earning ability?

<b>Monthly Wage</b> <b>£1,905</b>	<b>Full-Time Employment</b> Based on full-time employment with a salary of £29,970 and assuming salary deductions of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student Loan, post 2012 programme, £20</li><li>• Pension at 8.3% contributions, £207.29</li><li>• Tax and National Insurance, £364.54</li></ul>	
	<b>Full-Time Study (with or without Employment) – Completion within 12 months</b> Based on full-time study plus 1 day of paid employment at £29,970 pro-rata: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Annual tax free stipend £20,780 per annum, or £1,731 per calendar month</li><li>• One day (0.2FTE) paid employment at £5,994 per annum, or £499 per calendar month – tax free as the income is below the personal tax threshold</li></ul> <i>Please note full-time students can undertake no more than one day per week (0.2FTE) additional paid employment</i>	<b>Monthly Stipend</b> <b>£1,731 - £2,230</b>
<b>Monthly Stipend + Salary</b> <b>£2,138</b>	<b>Part-Time Study + Employment – Completion within 24 months</b> Based on part-time study plus 3 days (0.6FTE) of paid employment at £29,970 pro-rata: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Annual tax-free stipend £10,390 per annum, or £865 per calendar month</li><li>• Three days (0.6FTE) paid employment at £17,982 per annum, or £1,273 per calendar month assuming deductions for pension, tax, and national insurance</li></ul>	

The above examples provide an illustration of your potential earning ability should you choose to undertake full or part-time study, exact amounts will vary based on individual circumstances

It is the responsibility of the award holder to ensure they are complying with tax laws should additional paid work be completed in addition to the tax-free stipend payment.

We are always happy to discuss options based on your individual circumstances. Please get in touch at [INSIGHTNW@UCLan.ac.uk](mailto:INSIGHTNW@UCLan.ac.uk)

NB: As the Stipend is tax-free, undertaking additional paid work, over the hours detailed above, may incur tax implications. It is the responsibility of the award holder to ensure they are complying with tax laws should additional paid work be completed in addition to the tax-free Stipend payment.

## What if I need a break whilst I am on the programme?

Each of the HEIs/courses will have their own regulations on taking time off while you are studying. You will need to contact the course co-ordinator directly. If you are thinking that you may need a break when you are applying, you may wish to consider either part-time options or delaying your application. **Please Note:** Stipend payments would be suspended should study be interrupted, which may affect your personal financial circumstances.

## What other options are available that do not meet the eligibility criteria?

Information regarding alternative NIHR career development opportunities for doctors, dentists and experienced health and care practitioners can be found [here](#)