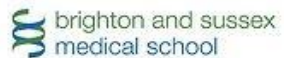




Stage 2 UK fellowship applications webinar
Monday 9th February 2026
14:15-15:15 GMT



Panel:

Chair – Prof **Gail Davey** (EDI lead) – BSMS

Dr **Katharina Kranzer** – LSHTM/BRTI

Dr **Rebecca Nightingale** – LSTM

Dr **Sarah Barber** (Current UK fellow) – KCL/CDT-Africa (Ethiopia)

Ms **Kate Mattick** (Current UK fellow) – BSMS/BRTI (Zimbabwe)

Ms **Christina Albertsen** (Programme Manager) – LSHTM

Purpose:

Information session about the Stage 2 UK fellowship application process. Including the documents required for submission (by Tuesday 17th March 2026) and the interview (on either Tuesday 12th or Wednesday 13th May 2026).

Format:

Presentations on the Stage 2 application process, how to prepare a winning application, and perspectives from current fellows.

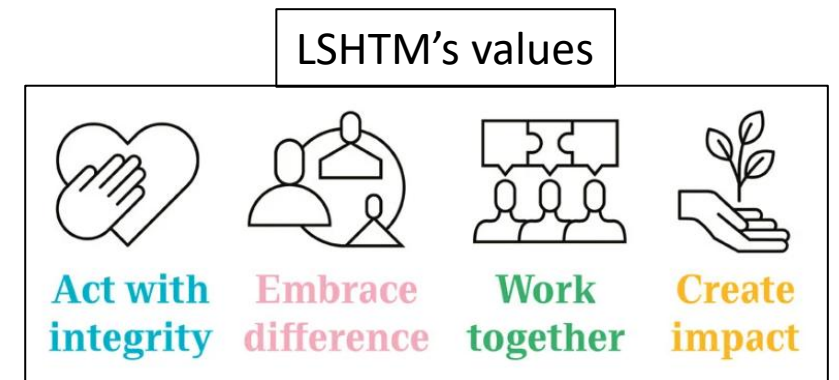
A moderated general Q&A

Follow-up:

Any unanswered questions can be sent to the panel afterwards at create-phd@lshtm.ac.uk

Housekeeping:

- This session will be recorded and made available at www.create-phd.org
- Only nominated panelists can be seen, heard, or screen share
- The audiences' mics and video are turned off
- The Q&A function is available in this session:
please ensure messages are respectful and in line with LSHTM's values
- Questions will be answered after all panelists' presentations



Panel presentation:
Christina Albertsen:
Stage 2 application process and documents.

Recap of the CREATE PhD Programme:

- Wellcome Trust funded programme: original number was 25 fellowships, due to budget constraints, this number has reduced slightly
- Open to UK/Republic of Ireland registered health professionals
- Fellows will register at one of the partner UK Institutions (UKI)
- Fellows will be based at an African Partner Institution (API) for 18-24 months
- Programme aimed to recruit and support matched African fellows from the APIs – this may not be possible with our final recruitment round and is institution and budget dependent

CREATE PhD Programme partners recap:



Biomedical Research
and Training Institute



Center for Innovative Drug Development
and Therapeutic Trials For Africa (A&A - M&P)



MRC/UVRI and LSHTM Uganda Research Unit



Uganda
Virus
Research
Institute



Research and Development
to Improve Health for All



Application process:

Stage 1
application
closed: **7th
November
2025**

Stage 2
application
closes: **17th
March 2026**

Assessment
of written
application
by external
review panel

Interviews:
**12th or 13th
May 2026**

Appointment
of
fellowships
by: **18th May
2026**

Stage 2 application:

- Due for submission by Tuesday 17th March 2026
- Documents include:
 - Project details form
 - Budget spreadsheet
 - Institutional authorisation form

Stage 2 application:

Before you start

- You need to identify a **supervisor** and a **UK host institution (UKI)**
- In addition, you need to identify an appropriate **African Partner Institution (API)** and an **African supervisor**. Your supervisors will support you to develop your project proposal
- At both UK and African institutions, you need a **Sponsor**: this is a senior academic (usually head of department, or head of institute) who will provide assurances that the institution is willing to host you and is a suitable place to undertake the project you are proposing
- Ensure at an early stage that your supervisor, sponsor and collaborators are able to confirm their contribution to the application

Stage 2 application:

Your UK host institution must be one of the partners in the programme: **BSMS, CSGUL, KCL, LSHTM, or QMUL.**

This is the institution where you will register your PhD, administer your grant and make available the requisite training you need for your fellowship.

You must have:

- **A sponsor** who holds an established post (or an honorary academic appointment) at your sponsoring organisation and is committed to helping you achieve your career aspirations and guarantees the resources that you will need.
- **A supervisor** who will offer you advice about your application and scientific guidance throughout the fellowship. Your supervisor must hold an employment contract with your host institution.

Stage 2 application:

Your **African Partner Institution (API)** must be one of the programme partners:

- MRC/UVRI & LSHTM Uganda Research Unit, Uganda
- MRC Gambia, The Gambia
- Center for Innovative Drug Development and Therapeutic Trials for Africa (CDT-Africa), Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia
- Zambart, Zambia
- Biomedical Research and Training Institute, Zimbabwe
- Zvitambo Institute for Maternal and Child Health Research, Zimbabwe

This is the institution where you will be based when you are in Africa conducting your research. The institution will administer your overseas research costs and make available the requisite support you need to conduct your research.

You must have a sponsor there who holds an established post at the API who will guarantee the resources you need.

You must also have a supervisor there who holds an employment contract with that organisation.

Stage 2 application:

Guidance

- Stage 2 Guidance document
- FAQs - on website - <https://www.create-phd.org/resources-1>
- UK institution and African partner institution support (supervisors, sponsors)
- CREATE Programme administration support – create-phd@lshtm.ac.uk
 - Budget guidance
 - Wellcome policy and regulations

Stage 2 application:

Guidance

- Programme Management Group (PMG) mentors – 1 UKI and 1 API
 - For the written application development –
 - The PMG mentor(s) can help you to identify appropriate UKI and API supervisors
 - The PMG mentor(s) may be able to suggest specific individuals and/or other experts in the field that they are aware of who may serve as co-supervisors or provide further advice on the application
 - The PMG mentor(s) may offer you a review of your Stage 2 project details document and/or budget
 - For the interviews –
 - The PMG mentor(s) may offer to provide a mock interview themselves, if this is feasible

Stage 2 application submission:

1. Project details form

Completion of:

- Institutional details
- Supervisor and sponsor
- Clinical status and duties
- Research training
- Research supervision
 - Supervisory plan
 - Supervisor training
- Research proposal
- Public engagement

- Impact
- Collaborators
- Research focus
 - The area of research should focus on health and be of relevance to Africa.
 - We particularly encourage interdisciplinary projects (rather than exclusively biomedical)
- You should have an appropriate supervisory team to support such a project
- Indicate the broader aspects around research, e.g. - engagement and impact
- Provide substantiation for the research training to be undertaken

Stage 2 application submission:

2. Budget

- The fellowship will provide a **full salary, research costs** and **overseas allowances** for when you are based at the API
- Please consult your **UK host institution administrator** for advice re: PhD fees, costing your salary, and allowances. In some cases, mostly if you're going to be registering at LSHTM, this will usually be myself
- Guidance about allowable costs is provided in the Stage 2 Guidance document, including information on costs for:
 - 1. Fellow's salary
 - 2. Full home rate PhD tuition fees
 - 3. Overseas allowances
 - 4. Research expenses
 - 5. Travel costs (including collaborative travel)
 - 6. Training costs

Stage 2 application submission:

2. Budget

- **Salaries** should be requested according to experience on the appropriate salary scale, including London weighting if relevant. If questions or issues arise, this should be discussed individually with myself. Your UKI may have the same salary scale you are currently on, or may place you on an equivalent scale if there is no exact match
- Justification of costs may need to be provided, if questions arise during the assessment by external panel. You may need to provide assurances from your host UK institution that the budget has been fully costed and approved, with relevant signatures from your head of faculty/institute (or equivalent) and research management office/operations team

Stage 2 application submission:

3. Institutional authorisation form

- The institutional authorisation form ensures your application and budget are authorised by both the proposed UKI and API before submission
- This form is signed by your **UKI sponsor and API sponsor** - both must be from the institutions where you are formally based
- You are expected to spend at least 18 and up to 24 months of your PhD based at your chosen API from where you will conduct your research
- A sponsor's role is to guarantee you the facilities, training, space, etc. at the relevant institutions and therefore it is usually a senior member of the institution. They may or may not necessarily be involved in the research (unlike the supervisor) but can serve as a guarantor
- **Ensure you have checked the timelines and internal institutional requirements for your UKI and API** for e.g. internal research finance sign-off. Some institutions require an 'intention to bid for funding' or 'notification of funding' application. This will be in a local format required by your institution

Assessment of written application by external review panel:

Broadly, the external review panel's assessment will look at:

- Track record and aptitude for a career as a clinical academic
- The scientific merit, feasibility and potential impact of your proposed project
- Plans for research training
- Suitability of your sponsor, supervisor and training environment

The external review panel (up to 4 independent reviewers) score each written application against a schematic with 8 domains.

Assessment of written application by external review panel:

- ✓ Importance of proposed research question to global health research
- ✓ Clarity of research question / hypothesis
- ✓ Appropriateness and quality of research methods; justification and integration of disciplinary elements
- ✓ Appropriateness of project as a PhD training experience
- ✓ Suitability of training plans
- ✓ Appropriateness of supervisory team
- ✓ Completeness / suitability of budget

Interview:

- External reviewers will review and score the Stage 2 application prior to interview
- Scores received by interview selection panel

Interview format:

- 25 minutes total
- 5-minute presentation: maximum 4 slides
- 1st slide: “Why this doctoral opportunity is the best next step for my career”
- Remaining slides: present and ‘sell’ your project

Interview:

- 12th or 13th May 2026
- In person at LSHTM offices
- Interview panel:
 - Programme Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Lead: Professor Gail Davey
 - Chair: Professor Richard Harding
 - External to the Programme Directorship
 - Multidisciplinary research and health professional expertise
 - Representation from African and UK Institutions

Interview:

Interviewers will assess the applicant's answers against the criteria for the role and will avoid comparing applicants against each other, unless for the purpose of calibration.

They will look at :

- Depth of understanding of the background to the proposed research question and methods
- Ownership of the proposed research
- Critical analysis of your proposed research
- Likelihood of a “successful fellowship”

Interview:

At the interview, the expectation is that candidates are assessed solely on their credentials and experiences and how well they meet the person specification from the job description.

Interview culture:

A culture that is creative, inclusive and honest.

Transformation of Research Culture and improving Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) is central to our programme's aim

Interview outcomes and fellowship appointment:

- Outcomes will be communicated by Monday 18th May 2026
- We are hoping to recruit 4 fellowships in this, our final year of recruitment, but this is budget dependant
- Entry start dates for 2026/2027 (i.e. from September 2026 onwards) should be within 12 months after fellowship offer

Panel discussion:
Gail Davey, Katharina Kranzer, and Rebecca Nightingale:
What makes a winning application, and top tips

Katharina Kranzer:

1. What skills would you would like to acquire - how these are embedded within your project?
2. It's a PhD – be collaborative and honest in what you can achieve

Gail Davey:

1. Acknowledge your role in the wider CREATE scheme
2. Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse.

Rebecca Nightingale:

1. Why your topic is important enough to be funded?
2. Convince the team that your project is feasible: can it be done and are you the right person to do it?

Panel presentation:
Sarah Barber, and Kate Mattick:
Perspectives from current fellows

Congratulations!

3 Ps – **Person (Stage 1)**, Project, Place

What we'll be talking about - Kate

- Establishing your team
- Building your project
- The Application
- The Budget
- The Interview
- Question & Answer

Establishing your research team - Kate

- Paired with institutional leads (mentors) to guide you
 - Schedule meetings
 - Ask lots of questions
 - Make use of their networks – speak with those affected by the issue you plan to research
 - Refining your team and project
- Build your own network
 - Great opportunity to meet new people
 - Cast a wide net across UK/African CREATE Institutions:
 - Potential supervisors
 - Research setting
 - Place
 - Email etiquette – don't be afraid to send a friendly follow-up, personalised clear emails with specific requests
 - Build in-country relationships, if it's not feasible to visit in advance then arrange calls with the field workers / researchers on the ground

Building your project - Sarah

- Narrow down your supervisory team and make use of an advisory panel
 - Area of interest/question, methodology and relationship
 - They don't always have to have the same background as you – interdisciplinary working is positive!
 - The most responsive individuals probably have more time – less responsive individuals may make better advisors/secondary supervisors
 - You can have cross-institutional supervision
- Narrow down your project idea
 - **Start writing** – you will need to block some time out for this, study leave / annual leave
 - Concept note/two paragraphs
 - Get feedback
 - Change is normal

Application Form -Kate

- Standardised sections for *any* project
 - Ask your supervisors for templates: Data Management, Material Transfer Agreements
 - Make-use of the teams at the institutions you are building your project with
- Use learning needs to devise a training schedule
 - Masters' modules? Training courses? How do they relate to your objectives?
 - [The Vitae Researcher Development Framework – Vitae](#)
- The Project Proposal
 - “Will this lead to new knowledge?”
 - 3 objectives, interrelated but sufficiently independent that you can complete a PhD if one (or two!) objective(s) falls through
 - A delicate balance between being precise (grounded in existing evidence) and vague (allowing you flexibility to explore)
 - Feasibility is a key consideration
 - Get writing & get feedback from diverse places (submit when you're on ~version +++)
 - Feedback is exhausting but golden – people are willing to give their time to support you

The Budget - Sarah

- Three: UK Expenditure, Overseas Expenditure, Overseas Allowance
- Start early, work on it alongside the application, get support
- Ask to see previous examples
- Pragmatic decisions – need approvals
- ‘Go Big’
- Engage with those with budget experience
 - Christina Albertsen (LSHTM) – other UK institutions will have their own experts
 - API – there will be a budgetary contact (finance team / research assistant) who can assist you
 - Follow the lead from others, e.g. how much is standard participant remuneration
 - Don’t forget costs like internet use in the API institution, stationary, team merchandise, petrol etc...
 - Some things are always expensive e.g. reagents/lab costs – consider whether you can apply for extra grant funding later in your PhD so you can commit more costs to personnel (e.g. research nurse)
 - Visas/work permits/licensing costs are all **separate** to research allowance

The Interview - Kate

- Read the proposal feedback
 - This thorough review is practically an interview-question guide, you can guide your presentation based on the feedback
- Interview format
- Practice presentation again and again, you may want a script to rehearse from – control what you can control
- Practice mock interviews
 - A hard and “nasty” one
 - A helpful and detailed one
- Time yourself, record yourself presenting, listen back on the move
- Practice the usual suspects – this is a global health fellowship
 - “what kind of researcher do you want to be?”
 - “what will you do if objective 1 doesn’t go to plan?”
 - Your insights / self-reflections on power dynamics and you potentially being a foreign researcher

Final Thought and Q&As - Sarah

- Intense period...make the time for it, this is potentially 3 years of your life and your chances are good at this stage!
- Speak to lots and lots of people – that are appropriate for what you need in your role
- Proposal will evolve and change – find and sell the *story*, why does the issue you are addressing matter?
- Identify your own particular skills or attributes and show them
- Things can (will) change after you start

Q&A and thank you to our panel

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Ms **Kate Mattick** (Current UK fellow) – BSMS/BRTI (Zimbabwe)

Ms **Christina Albertsen** (Programme Manager) – LSHTM

If your question has not been answered, you have any further questions, or you would like more details/clarification, please do not hesitate to email us at create-phd@lshtm.ac.uk

This webinar recording will be available for viewing on the CREATE website after this event

www.create-phd.org

Thank you for attending and
good luck with finalising your application