Clinical Teaching Fellow Programmes

A Practical Guide for Programme Leads

Clinical Teaching Fellow (CTF) posts are now widely used across UK hospitals to support the delivery of undergraduate and postgraduate medical education. As medical student numbers increase and clinical services remain under pressure, many organisations rely on CTFs to help sustain high-quality clinical placements and structured teaching programmes.

CTF roles can bring benefits to learners, fellows, faculty and healthcare organisations. For learners, fellows often provide accessible near-peer teaching, increased supervision and greater continuity within clinical placements. For organisations, CTFs can expand teaching capacity within busy clinical environments and support delivery of structured education programmes without increasing pressure on consultant staff.

Some programmes also combine educational responsibilities with clinical duties, enabling fellows to contribute to clinical rotas while maintaining a strong educational focus. This can support workforce needs while ensuring that teaching commitments continue to be met.

For fellows themselves, these posts provide opportunities to develop as educators, leaders and clinicians. Many roles include experience in teaching, curriculum development, educational innovation, quality improvement and scholarship, alongside access to educator development opportunities or postgraduate education qualifications.

This guide provides practical tools to support aspiring and current programme leads who are establishing new CTF posts or strengthening existing programmes.

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Common Models of Clinical Teaching Fellow Posts

Across NHS organisations, CTF roles typically fall into three broad models.

Education-focused Clinical Teaching Fellow

These roles are primarily dedicated to teaching and educational activities. Fellows may deliver structured teaching programmes, clinical skills teaching, bedside teaching, simulation sessions and assessment support.

This model is particularly useful in hospitals with large medical student cohorts and strong undergraduate education programmes.

Integrated Clinical–Education Fellow

In this model fellows divide their time between teaching responsibilities and clinical work, often in roughly equal proportions. Fellows may contribute to ward work, clinics or departmental rotas while delivering teaching programmes.

This approach allows fellows to maintain clinical skills while supporting both educational and service needs.

Specialty Education Fellow

These posts are based within a specific clinical specialty and include defined teaching responsibilities within that discipline. Fellows may develop specialty teaching programmes, simulation training or clinical skills sessions linked to the department.

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Key Design Considerations

When developing or reviewing a CTF programme, several practical considerations can help ensure roles are effective and sustainable.

Clarify the purpose of the role
Identify the primary focus of the post, such as undergraduate teaching, postgraduate education, simulation training or specialty education.

Decide the education–clinical balance
CTF roles range from fully education-focused posts to mixed clinical–education models. Many programmes adopt a mixed approach to maintain fellows' clinical skills while supporting teaching delivery.

Protect time for education
Educational responsibilities should be clearly protected within the job plan to prevent teaching time being eroded by service pressures.

Provide educator development
Teaching is a professional skill. Fellows benefit from supervision, mentorship and access to educator development opportunities.

Include opportunities for projects
Many successful programmes allow fellows to contribute to educational innovation, quality improvement or research.

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Programme Design Checklist

When creating or reviewing a CTF role, consider whether the following are clearly defined:

- Purpose of the role (e.g. undergraduate teaching, postgraduate education, simulation)
- Balance between educational and clinical responsibilities
- Clinical duties and rota expectations
- Protected time for education
- Scope of teaching activities
- Opportunities for educational projects or innovation
- Access to educator development or qualifications
- Named educational supervisor or mentor
- Integration with the wider medical education team
- Opportunities for leadership or career development

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Template Job Description

Job Title
Clinical Teaching Fellow

Purpose of the Role

The Clinical Teaching Fellow will support the delivery of undergraduate and/or postgraduate medical education within the organisation. The post provides an opportunity for a motivated doctor to develop as a clinical educator while contributing to high-quality teaching and supporting learner development.

Depending on programme design, the role may combine educational responsibilities with clinical duties.

Key Responsibilities

Teaching and education

- Deliver small-group and bedside teaching
- Support clinical skills and simulation teaching
- Contribute to structured teaching programmes
- Assist with assessments such as OSCEs

Educational development

- Support curriculum delivery and organisation of teaching programmes
- Assist with evaluation and improvement of teaching activities
- Develop educational resources

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Educational projects and scholarship

- Participate in educational innovation or quality improvement projects
- Contribute to educational research where appropriate

Clinical duties (if applicable)

- Participate in clinical duties within the host department
- Contribute to departmental rotas where appropriate
- Maintain clinical competence and professional development

Professional development

- Engage in educator development programmes

- Develop a teaching portfolio
- Participate in appraisal and educational supervision

Template Person Specification

Essential

- Primary medical qualification
- Full GMC registration with licence to practise
- Completion of Foundation Training or equivalent experience
- Demonstrated interest in medical education
- Experience teaching medical students or junior doctors
- Strong communication and organisational skills

Desirable

- Postgraduate qualification in medical education or willingness to undertake one
- Experience organising teaching programmes
- Experience in simulation or clinical skills teaching
- Involvement in educational projects or research

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Developing a Business Case for CTF Posts

Programme leads may need to develop a short proposal when establishing new CTF roles.

Background

Hospitals increasingly face challenges in delivering high-quality teaching alongside clinical service pressures. Growing medical student numbers and expanding placement requirements mean that additional teaching capacity is often required.

Proposed solution

Establish Clinical Teaching Fellow posts to support the delivery of teaching programmes while contributing to clinical service where appropriate.

Expected benefits

Educational benefits

- Increased teaching capacity
- Improved learner supervision and feedback
- More consistent teaching programmes

Workforce benefits

- Additional support for clinical rotas
- Potential reduction in reliance on locum doctors

Organisational benefits

- Supports expansion of medical student placements
- Strengthens partnerships with medical schools
- Develops future clinical educators and education leaders

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Governance

Effective CTF programmes should include:

- A named educational supervisor
- Integration with the medical education department
- Clearly defined job plans with protected teaching time
- Opportunities for professional development and mentorship