

Clinical Academics in Training Annual Conference (CATAC) 2026 competition guidelines

Our Clinical Academics in Training Annual Conference (CATAC) is a unique cross-speciality event designed to bring clinical academics from across disciplines together to present their work, meet one another and network with senior researchers.

CATAC 2026 will be held on **Wednesday 29 April** at [MRC Laboratory of Medical Sciences in London](#). This is an in-person event.

If you are an early career medical researcher in medicine or health, with a background in any clinical discipline or speciality, CATAC is a great opportunity to:

- present your research to an academic audience
- develop your presentation skills in a supportive environment
- meet with your peers and senior academics to build networks
- raise your profile within the clinical academic and medical research community
- meet Academy Fellows

Application guidelines Quick Navigation

Eligibility criteria

CATAC 2026 Competitions

Scoring criteria for competitions

Outcome release

How to apply

Application form summary

General advice

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for the CATAC 2026 event competitions, you must be an early career researcher in medicine or health who also meets all the following criteria:

- Based in the UK or Ireland
- Either studying for your PhD or have completed your PhD and are conducting research as an *early career* post-doctoral researcher
- Conducting academic research that is related to your clinical background
- Hold a relevant undergraduate and/or master's degree, for example medicine, nursing, midwifery, dentistry, veterinary sciences or other health professional degree

CATAC 2026 competitions

The conference includes two competitions and one exhibition for early career researchers wishing to present their research:

1. Post-doctoral Plenary Competition – selected competitors at early career post-doctoral level (passed viva by abstract submission deadline) will be asked to prepare a 10-minute oral presentation, to be followed by 5 minutes of questions from the audience. A panel of judges will score the presentations and there will be one winner and one runner-up, who will each receive a monetary prize.
2. Pre-doctoral Plenary Competition – selected competitors at pre-doctoral level (who have not yet passed viva) will be asked to prepare a 5-minute oral presentation, to be followed by 2 minutes of questions from the audience. A panel of judges will score the presentations and there will be one winner and one runner-up, who will each receive a monetary prize.
3. Poster Exhibition – This year, instead of a poster competition, there will be a poster exhibition held without formal judging. This will give presenters the opportunity to present their work while also networking and engaging with their peers.

Please note, you **do not** have to participate in a competition in order to attend CATAC 2026.
Event registration for non-competing attendees will open in January/February 2026.

Scoring criteria for competitions

Submitted abstracts will be scored by a panel of Academy Fellows and senior researchers. Each abstract will be assessed on overall quality, applicability, and innovation of the research, as well as the standard of written communication. When making their assessment, judges will consider the following questions:

- Is the research innovative and exciting?
- Does the research have potential to deliver novel information to the field?
- Is the research proposal appropriate and well thought out?
- Has the applicant demonstrated clear understanding of the implications of their research?
- Is the abstract communicated well to a scientific, but non-specialised, reader?

Selection process for the poster exhibition

Due to limited capacity at the venue, there will be a selection process. This will be randomised, while ensuring a minimum number of places go to those who are from underrepresented backgrounds. There will be no formal judging or scoring before nor on the day of the conference.

We seek and celebrate diversity in all its forms, confident in the knowledge that our differences can only strengthen medical science. We strive to ensure that no individual or group is disadvantaged on any ground including age, caring responsibilities, disability, gender reassignment, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief.

Our EDI work expands beyond protected characteristics to include geography, research subject and sector, clinical and non-clinical specialties, career stage, and socio-economic background. The process has been developed in consultation with the Academy's Senior Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Manager, Vivien Kintu. The steps to the selection process include:

- A short question asking competitors to tick a box if they are from an underrepresented background in line with our EDI Strategy 2023-26. Completion of this section of the form is optional.
- We will first select one third of the available places from the pool of competitors with protected characteristics (stratifying by clinical specialty).
- Any unselected competitors from this group will go back into the general applicant pool. We will then randomly select from this general pool for the remaining number of places.

Outcome release

We aim to notify you of the outcome of your submission by the end of **February 2026**.

How to apply

The application window for those wishing to participate in the CATAC 2026 competition will open on **Tuesday 4 November 2025** and will close at **16.00 (GMT) on Thursday 8 January 2026**.

For the application form, you will be asked to submit a research abstract of no more than 450 words, split into four sections: background; methods; findings; and interpretation.

Submitted abstracts will be scored by a panel of Academy Fellows and senior research professionals, who will determine which candidates are invited to participate in the post- and pre-doctoral plenary competitions and a randomised process for the poster exhibition.

You will be able to indicate on the submission form whether you would like your abstract to be considered for the poster exhibition if it is not selected for an oral presentation. Depending on the number of applications we receive, we may not be able to provide every candidate the opportunity to present a poster. Therefore, you will also be able to indicate on the submission form whether you would still like to attend CATAC 2026 even if your abstract is not chosen for any competition.

A maximum of one abstract may be submitted per person as a competitor; however, there is no limit on the number of abstracts you can be listed on as an author.

Please note: applicants who have previously won an event competition at CATAC will not be eligible to compete again in that category. We will accept applications from previous poster competition winners wishing to apply for a plenary talk competition, and vice versa.

Application form summary

To submit an abstract for the CATAC 2026 event competitions you will be asked to fill in an application form. Details of what will be included in this form are outlined within this document. The application window will open on **Tuesday 4 November 2025** and will close at **16.00 GMT on Thursday 8 January 2026**; please see the [Academy webpage](#) for the latest information.

Please note: you may attend CATAC 2026 without taking part in either of the competitions. Event registration for non-competing attendees will open in **January/February 2026**.

Pre-application monitoring information form

The Academy of Medical Sciences accepts its responsibilities to reflect the communities in which it works. We are therefore committed to a policy of Equal Opportunities and applications are welcome regardless of marital status, sexual orientation, age, disability, ethnic origin, or religious belief.

We request this information to monitor the Academy's activities with respect to the beneficiaries of proposals and awards, and applicants. It is not used in the application review process: it is not provided to any CATAC reviewers or judges. By providing this information, you are agreeing to us holding this information, under current data protection legislation, and will be helping us to monitor our practice.

1. Personal details

Including: title and name (as you would like them to appear on the CATAC 2026 abstract booklet); contact information; eligibility confirmation; job title; university and/hospital affiliation; broad clinical area; clinical discipline; information about your current research position; PhD (whether on-going or complete); X , LinkedIn or Bluesky handle (optional); and ORCID iD.

2. Competitions and attendance

Including: which competition(s) you would like your abstract to be considered for; and attendance confirmation if abstract is not selected for competition.

If you have selected to be a part of the poster exhibition, you will also have the option to let us know if you identify as having some specific protected characteristics. We will use this information to increase the proportion of researchers from underrepresented groups taking part in the exhibition.

Tick the box if you identify as having protected characteristics and would like this information to be used during the selection process to ensure equity and inclusion in the selection process. Please note that by ticking the box you are giving us permission to use this information in our selection process. Completion of this section of the form is optional.

3. Abstract submission

We recommend that competitors write their abstracts in plain English. To do this we recommend that you:

- use language and words that are short and easy to understand
- avoid being too academic in your style of writing and word choice
- avoid acronyms and abbreviations but if you do need to use them, make sure that you spell them out in the first instance with the acronyms in brackets, which can then be used on their own in the rest of the text
- avoid jargon – technical or industry-specific terms that will only be understandable to certain audiences

You will be asked to complete the following sections:

i. Title

Your abstract title MUST describe both your research topic and methodology, for example: "A randomised controlled trial for varying dietary sodium levels in mild and moderate hypertension." *Please note: you will be asked to resubmit your abstract title if these guidelines are not adhered to.*

ii. Background

This should include: context; and aims. *Maximum 100 words.*

iii. Methods

This should include: study design; participants; interventions; analysis; and ethical consent and trial registration, where appropriate. *Maximum 100 words.*

iv. Findings

This should include: number of participants; outcomes; statistical effects; and adverse events. *Maximum 150 words.*

v. Interpretation

This should include: general interpretation from results; significance of results; and strengths and limitations of the study. *Maximum 100 words.*

Additional information for the post-doctoral plenary competition only

You will be asked to complete a statement on the wider implications of your research. This should concisely outline the main ways that your research may have an effect on other areas of research, healthcare or medicine that are not dealt with directly in your research. For example, research into the development of a new vaccine might change how patients with similar illnesses are treated and inform public health policy. *Maximum 150 words.*

4. Contribution of authors

You will be asked to provide a statement describing the contribution of each author in the study following the [CRediT Taxonomy of author contributions](#). All of the authors listed should be mentioned in this section at least once.

Example: Conceptualisation, D.P.W. and E.F.; methodology, A.B., D.P.W., and E.F.; investigation, A.W., S.B., N.G., D.P.W., and E.F.; writing – original draft, D.P.W. and E.F.; writing – review & editing, D.P.W. and E.F.; funding acquisition, D.P.W. and E.F.; resources, H.N. and C.B.; supervision, A.B., K.M., and S.C.

As the submitting author will be responsible for completing this information at submission, it is expected that all authors will have reviewed, discussed, and agreed to their individual contributions ahead of this time.

5. Uploading a Word document of your abstract

Please upload a Word document of your abstract. If you are selected to compete, this will be the version sent to the proofreader of our abstract booklet. You will be asked for your approval of the changes before your abstract is published.

The Word version of your abstract must be identical to that submitted on the Flexi-Grant system.

6. Applicant declaration

Agree/disagree with Data Protection Statement.

7. Marketing feedback

We are requesting this information to help us monitor the effectiveness of our marketing activities. The information is not used in the application review process.

General advice

Please consult the following reporting guidelines, if appropriate to the design of your study:

- Reports of randomised trials must conform to [CONSORT 2010 guidelines](#) and should include a section describing randomisation and masking within the Methods section.
- Cluster-randomised trials or randomised trials that report harms must be reported according to [CONSORT extended guidelines](#).

- Studies of diagnostic accuracy must be reported according to [STARD guidelines](#).
- Observational studies (cohort, case-control, or cross-sectional designs) must be reported according to the [STROBE statement](#).
- Genetic association studies must be reported according to [STREGA guidelines](#).
- Systematic reviews and meta-analyses must be reported according to [PRISMA guidelines](#).
- To find reporting guidelines, see: <http://www.equator-network.org>.

For support with your application, watch the [CATAC 2022 plenary competition presentations](#). Please see the Academy's [top tips on how to communicate science effectively](#) and [what makes a great lay summary](#).

Information regarding Flexi-Grant:

- You will need to create an account on our grant management system Flexi-Grant before you can access the application form.
- Once you have started an application, you will be able to save your application and resume filling it in later.
- Once your application form is complete, you will need to formally submit your application, the button for which can be found in the top right portion of the webpage. Applications that are 100% complete but not formally submitted within the deadline will not be considered.
- You will receive email confirmation that your application has been submitted.
- Once you have submitted your application form, the details within it cannot be changed, therefore please ensure all information is correct to the best of your knowledge before clicking submit and contact Academy staff as soon as possible if you notice an error in your submitted form.

All queries should be directed to grants@acmedsci.ac.uk