

NIH Graduate Medical Education: Non-Standard Training (NST) Programs Frequently Asked Questions

What about NIH's other graduate medical education clinical and translational (non-standard) training programs?

Like many other academic medical centers, the NIH trains physician-scientists at the Clinical Center in many different disciplines, techniques, and areas of research that do not fit within the usual framework for ACGME accreditation. Some of these programs are accredited through other accrediting bodies, but most are “stand alone” or “one of a kind” entities. Training at NIH is unique in its emphasis on groundbreaking clinical and basic biomedical research, so trainees who choose non-standard training programs are usually focused on establishing a set of research or clinical skills that will support careers in academic medicine. A pre-requisite for most of the non-standard training programs is that the applicant has completed, at a minimum, residency training in a core specialty.

What are some unique aspects of a clinical fellowship on the NIH campus?

Perhaps the most unique aspect of training at NIH is the freedom to ask questions and engage in the process of discovering answers. In this process, you will develop the unique skill set of a clinician-scientist, be trained by internationally recognized experts in your field of interest, find willing and open partners to collaborate with both within and beyond your “home” NIH Institute or Center, and practice translational medicine at America’s largest research hospital. Whether you continue at NIH or pursue another career track after completing your fellowship, these experiences at NIH will positively contribute to your having a sustainable and differentiating career path.

Are there differences for fellows in non-ACGME-accredited programs?

In general, the accredited and non-accredited programs on campus function similarly and follow the same policies, but there are some differences to note. The NIH recognizes that a trainee’s decision regarding what type of fellowship to pursue must be individually based on clinical and research interests and on future career goals. The NIH is committed to providing the requisite training opportunities for fellows to reach those goals, whether this is accomplished through accredited programs subject to external curricular and organizational oversight, e.g. ACGME, or through internally administered programs designed to provide individualized learner-centered biomedical education and specialized clinical research experiences.

We recognize that there are potential advantages to sponsoring both accredited and non-accredited training programs. For example, many of our accredited programs offer NST years after completion of the required rotations for board eligibility. This provides an opportunity to extend training into subspecialty research in a seamless fashion. The stand-alone non-accredited training programs often are in “super-specialty” disciplines where a formal curriculum may not be fully defined, and the requirements for training are more individualized and cannot be generalized to other centers outside the NIH. A less structured program may be a good fit for you, if you want the flexibility to pursue your “niche” as a clinician- investigator and have a strong desire to start building your own independent academic career. Other differences for clinical fellows in non-accredited programs on the NIH campus are illustrated in the answers to the questions below.

Do fellows in non-accredited programs receive similar benefits?

As Federal employees, all clinical fellows in non-accredited programs are eligible to receive

standard benefits including paid annual and sick leave, health insurance, life insurance, and retirement. Annual salary follows a government pay model and is a function of the number of years (PGY level) spent in graduate medical training prior to matriculation in an NIH program.

Other benefits may be available to non-accredited program fellows at the discretion of the NIH Institute or Center administratively responsible for the operation of the program. Before accepting an appointment in a training program, interested fellows should discuss with the program director all terms, conditions and benefits of employment, and any other position-specific or work-life concerns, just as would be the case for any job negotiation.

Are fellows in non-accredited programs eligible for the NIH Loan Repayment Programs (LRP)?

Yes, they are potentially eligible for the [competitive Loan Repayment Programs](#) for intramural NIH fellows. These require the submission of a competitive application and may have minimum years of training to qualify.

More detailed information about the NIH's Loan Repayment Program is available at <https://www.lrp.nih.gov/eligibility-programs>. Please visit the Loan Repayment Programs website (www.lrp.nih.gov) or feel free to call them at 1-866-849-8047 or send them an e-mail to lrp@nih.gov.

Do the Work Hours rules apply to fellows in non-accredited programs?

The NIH Graduate Medical Education Committee (GMEC) has established a policy addressing work hours and "moonlighting." The GMEC requires that all training programs maintain compliance with this policy. All fellows must also abide by the policies and procedures established by the Medical Executive Committee of the NIH Clinical Center and by the internal policies developed by their individual NIH Institutes or Centers and program directors.

Does the NIH support visas for applicants who are not United States (US) citizens? How are credentials evaluated?

Yes, the NIH generally support visas for applicants and those who apply to non-standard training (NST) programs may have their J-1 visa sponsored if the program has received ACGME approval, and there are sufficient years remaining for the proposed training period. Other visa options, such as the H-1B, may be available to some applicants as well as other less frequently used visa mechanisms. Applicants should contact the individual training programs directly for more information. More details about the NIH Visiting Program and other visa-related information are available at the Division of International Services (DIS) website at <http://dis.ors.od.nih.gov/>.

Concerning credentials for foreign trained medical professionals, each individual's application is evaluated on the basis of prior education, training, experience, professional responsibilities, current clinical competence, health status, and active licensure and/or ECFMG certification, if applicable. The NIH licensure policies state that each member of the Active Medical Staff at the NIH Clinical Center, including clinical fellows, shall possess and maintain a current, active license to practice in the United States, with few exceptions.

Who should I contact with questions?

The director of the training program in which you are interested, and the PI on the research projects in which you are most interested, should be your first sources of information. They will most often be able to answer questions very specific to your scientific and clinical interests.