

# How to become a registered clinical scientist using the Higher Training Scheme



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*The British Academy of Audiology (BAA) Higher Training Scheme (HTS) was launched in November 2006, and there are currently three clinical and three non-clinical modules. The good news is that you can now use elements of the HTS to gain clinical scientist registration, as an alternative to doing the Certificate of Audiological Competence (CAC).*

If wanting to register as a clinical scientist with the Health Professions Council (HPC), you first have to gain the Certificate of Attainment from the Association of Clinical Scientists (ACS). Once you have this certificate you can then apply to the HPC for registration. There are two different routes to gain this certificate.

For both routes a portfolio of evidence of the training received has to be compiled to show that the individual has achieved a number of competencies. This portfolio is assessed and the individual is interviewed by two assessors who can then make a recommendation to the board of the Association of Clinical Scientists to award the Certificate of Attainment. The competencies include the following areas:

- scientific
- clinical, technical
- research and development
- communication
- problem solving
- management

The individual has to demonstrate that all competencies have been covered and there are no significant gaps. For more information about this process and for the full set of competencies please see <http://www.assclnsci.org/applicants/my-route-to-registration/>.

## Route 1

Route 1 is the training programme route. You have to complete a BAA accredited MSc in Audiology, followed by an approved training scheme plus any further supervised experience necessary in order to demonstrate all the required competencies. This training programme needs to be supervised by a HPC registered clinical scientist, who is on Agenda for Change band 8 and has at least 6 years post registration experience, or someone on the GMC medical register. The

supervisor must be in a field relevant to your modality, which in our case is Audiology. The ACS assessors strongly recommend that supervision is provided by a clinical scientist and not medical practitioner, as the former is more likely to have a better understanding of the role of a clinical scientist and therefore ensure appropriate training and supervision is received. If there is no clinical scientist in your department then it is fine to get a clinical scientist outside your department to supervise you. The training period must total no less than four years, but this four year period can start at the commencement of the MSc. Until this year, the only approved training scheme was the CAC. Now a combination of HTS modules has been approved by the ACS as an alternative, shown in box 1.

The HTS alternative takes the individual above and beyond the current CAC. The latter only just touches on service development, and does not involve the development of research skills. Therefore, those completing the CAC then have to undergo further training in these areas before they can apply for the Certificate of Attainment. Typically, the CAC is completed in 18 months and there is then a further 18 month period during which the other competencies have to be gained. However, with the new HTS the individual will have attained all the necessary competencies once they have completed the specified modules, but completing all these modules is likely to take three years.

The HTS has a number of advantages compared to the CAC scheme. It is modular, so an individual can concentrate on one module or one set of exams at a time. It is accessible to all audiology practitioners practising at AFC band 5 or above. There is no time limit for completing modules, although at the point of examination, skills and knowledge have to be up to date, and at the time of the Association of Clinical Scientist's interview



for the certificate of attainment, all skills and knowledge have to be up to date. Therefore, you would have to use continuous professional development to maintain skills and knowledge for modules completed earlier on in training.

The HTS adult rehabilitation and first line diagnostic assessment has some exemptions for individuals who have completed the Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC). This is awarded

Box 1 – HTS modules needed under route 1 as an alternative to the CAC

**Clinical modules:**

- HCCC Paediatric assessment
- HCCC Balance assessment and rehabilitation
- HCCC Adult rehabilitation and first line diagnostic assessment

**Non-clinical modules:**

- Certificate in Research Methods
- Certificate in Service Development

by the University of Manchester, University of Southampton or University College London, to post graduate diploma students once they have completed their one year in service training, a BAA accredited BSc in Audiology or BAAT part 2 (see HCCC module pack for details).

The BAA would like to encourage all new clinical scientist trainees and their supervisors to consider enrolling on the HTS as opposed to the CAC from now on. The HTS will continue to evolve and update with new practice, where as the CAC will not undergo any further revisions, and will be discontinued at some point in the future. It will be possible to register on the CAC until December 2009 to allow the current recruitment of trainees who are due to start the MSc courses this autumn, and then in-service training to start in autumn 2009 to do the CAC if they wish. However, new trainees are encouraged to ask if they can complete the HTS modules instead of enrolling on the CAC. Those who have regionally funded training places should be aware that unless the training post is for a full four years (including their MSc year), they should not expect to complete all five HTS modules required for registration. Trainees are advised to concentrate on the clinical modules initially, and aim to complete these within the training period if it is of a more limited duration.

When submitting a portfolio under route 1, there is no need to include specific details of the MSc completed or the CAC/HTS modules. As these are BAA approved schemes, the assessors are familiar with the content, but proof of completion (i.e. copies of certificates) are needed.

**Route 2**

Applications under route 2 are applicable to those who have not completed a formal pre-registration training and it is rare that this route is followed in Audiology. These individuals need to gain an undergraduate degree and then spend a minimum of three years under supervision working in their branch of clinical science plus another three years in some other relevant activity, which may include time doing a PhD or working as a Medical Technical Officer (or post Agenda for Change equivalent), to make a total of six years. This period of six years postgraduate training does not have to be continuous. You must have been supervised for this period by someone already on the HPC clinical scientist register who is AFC band 8 or above, with a minimum of six years post registration experience, or on the GMC medical register. As with the route 1 applicants, the assessors strongly recommend supervision by a clinical scientist rather than medical practitioner.

For route 2, individuals need a minimum of an appropriate BSc degree at 1st or 2nd class. Applicants without this basic degree requirement but which is superseded by an appropriate MSc or PhD may also apply. There is not a list of approved BSc courses, and it would be up to the individual to make a case that the degree was appropriate, and argue it through if successful at getting an interview. Box 2 gives an indication of the sorts of BSc degrees, which may be considered appropriate. Those with a postgraduate diploma in Audiology are not exempt from the need for an appropriate BSc degree.

Box 2 – BSc degrees which may be appropriate for route 2 applicants

- Physics
- Biological sciences
- Medical Physics
- Psychology
- Audiology



## Which route to take?

In practice the vast majority of individuals choose to train on route 1 as completing an approved training scheme ensures competencies are more easily achieved. Those applying via route 2 need to submit a far more detailed portfolio, to include detailed information of any degrees obtained and are subject to a longer interview.

However, the new HTS may make it easier for individuals to apply via route 2. An individual who has completed (i) a BSc in Audiology, then elements of the HTS or (ii) an appropriate BSc plus the post-graduate diploma in Audiology and elements of the HTS, may find it easier to prove competencies have been met. However, it must be remembered that the total period of postgraduate experience (i.e. post BSc) must be a minimum of six years, such that if you graduated with a BSc in Audiology last summer (2007) the earliest you could apply via this route is summer 2013. The assessors would recommend that individuals wanting to apply for the Certificate of Attainment via route 2 consider completing the same combination of HTS modules that is needed for applicants via route 1.

### Route 1 using the HTS? Here's what you need to do:

1. Complete an accredited MSc in Audiology.
2. Find a registered clinical scientist who is willing to be your supervisor. This will ideally be within your department for convenience, but if there is no-one suitable or able to do this, look to other local departments. If not within your department, make sure your line manager commits to allowing you to have regular meetings with your clinical scientist supervisor, which may include tutorials or clinical practice according to your needs. This supervisor will have to complete part of the application form you submit with your completed portfolios to confirm they have supervised your training.
3. If your line manager isn't the one who is supervising your training, make sure they are fully aware of what the training involves, and that time and money will be needed to complete the training. You don't want to get part way through and then have a battle to secure the time to get everything completed.

4. Find out if your department is accredited for the HCCC modules. If not, could it apply for accreditation? This is very easy to do (see BAA website under Higher Training Scheme). If this is not possible, you will need to find other departments to do the training in.
5. Complete the HTS registration form(s). You need one form for each module. You can register for one module at a time, or more than one at once, dependent on how you have agreed to complete your training. If you are not able to do all the training in your own department, you will need to get written approval from both your own department and the department you will be training in, to include details of the actual time to be spent in the other department, and send this information in with your registration form. Failure to do this means you can't start the scheme.
6. Start training!



If you have any further questions please first have a look at the HTS section on the BAA website ([baaudiology.org](http://baaudiology.org)) and the ACS website (<http://www.assclnsci.org/>). There was also a very good article about the HTS scheme in the January 2008 (issue 8) edition of the BAA newsletter. If there is anything you are still unsure of having looked at all the information available please contact me [helen.martin@stees.nhs.uk](mailto:helen.martin@stees.nhs.uk), and I will try my best to help.

## References

- Ferguson M. 2008 BAA Higher Training Scheme – What's it all about? BAA Newsletter, issue 8.