Workforce support

IBMS non-accredited degree assessment – application fee support

Biomedical Science support staff

We re-instated funding to support existing NHSScotland HCS support staff in laboratories at career framework Levels 2–4 to apply for the recognition of their learning and experience (non-accredited degree assessment) by the IBMS. This initiative complemented our Support Worker commission.

This fund was targeted at science graduates entering the laboratory service, but not in possession of accredited qualifications to become a Biomedical Scientist. They may apply to the IBMS to have their qualifications assessed for comparability with the professional standards. IBMS will indicate the academic 'top-up' required to become registrable.

The transcript assessment fee was met by us to provide progression opportunities to science graduate support staff and to help accelerate the supply of Biomedical Scientists. During the 2023–24 financial year, we supported **25** staff across NHSScotland (Figure 1) to begin their journey on this pathway.

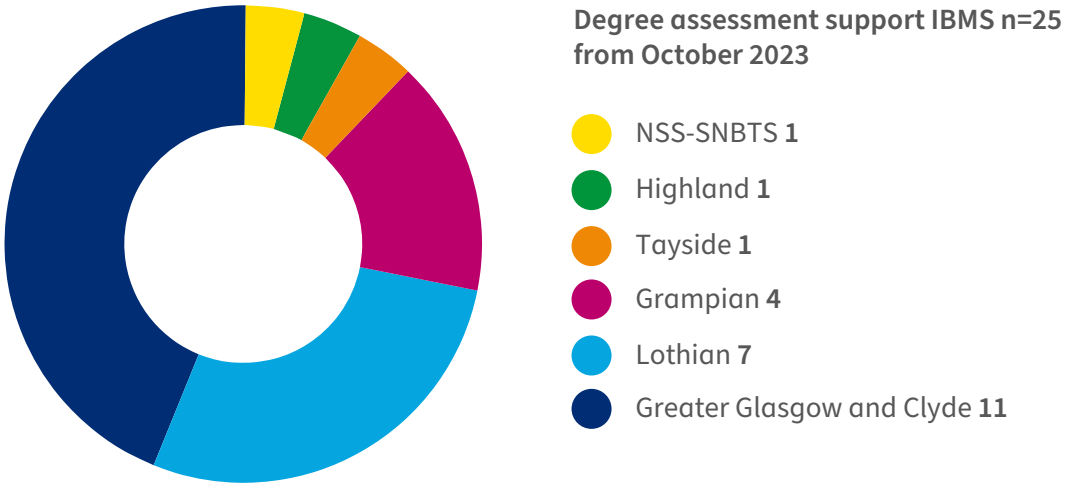

Figure 1: Chart showing distribution of staff across NHSScotland supported through non-accredited degree assessment by NES in 2023–24

The time-scale to acquire IBMS assessment for this cohort is beyond the reporting period of this annual report, but **10** applicants have had a positive outcome as of May 2024.

In summary, outcomes indicate an average of **5** (range 3–8) top-up modules are required to achieve registration.

The average cost per module is £500 and the time-scale to achieve completion (driven by individual circumstances) is on average 1 year (range 0.5–3 years). Applicants were largely self-funding these modules.

Postgraduate bursary support for in-service staff

Each Spring we invite bids from practitioner staff for postgraduate study support. Bids are almost exclusively from Biomedical Scientists seeking to undertake Master's degree programmes and begin advanced practice.

Between 2023 and 2024

We receieved **37** bids. Our team of **9** assessors identified **27** applicants for support, with an average bursary payment of **£2230** as a contribution towards further study.

Recipients were issued with a National Training Number (NTN) and asked to complete a training plan to become part of our wider postgraduate scientist trainee cohort.

> Feedback from supervisors and applicants indicates the NES Healthcare Science postgraduate bursary is a first resort for many applicants, who must be seen to apply to us before being considered for local endowment funds. For this reason, we promote our bursary support as early as possible within the financial year.

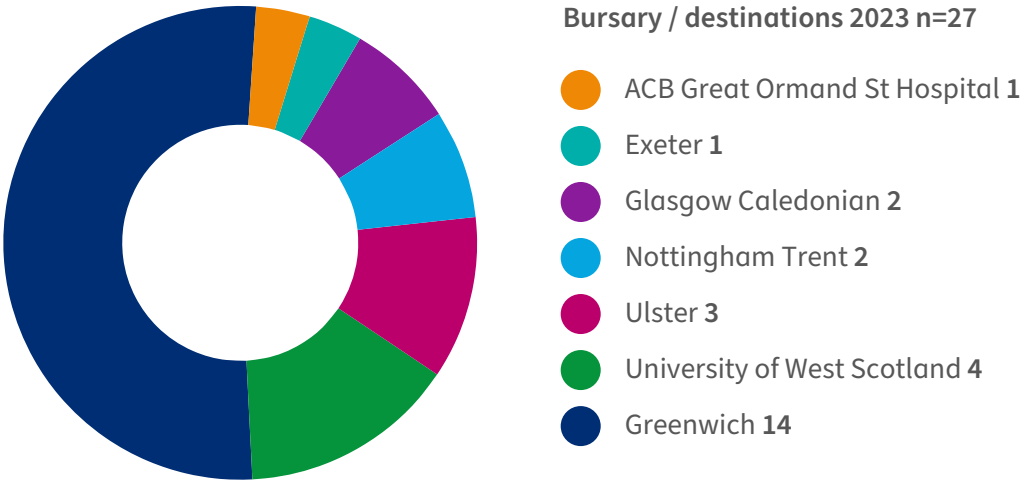

Figure 2: The educational destination of our 27 bursary supported staff in 2023–24

Our total cohort of postgraduate Biomedical Scientist in advance practice development currently stands at **42**, across a range of laboratory specialties. The principal specialisms are Haematology, Biochemistry, Microbiology / Virology and Histo / Cytopathology (Figure 3). Typically, trainees are enrolled on a distance learning programme over 2 years. The preponderance of Biomedical Scientist applications reflects their well-defined career structure which requires Master's-level qualifications for advancement.

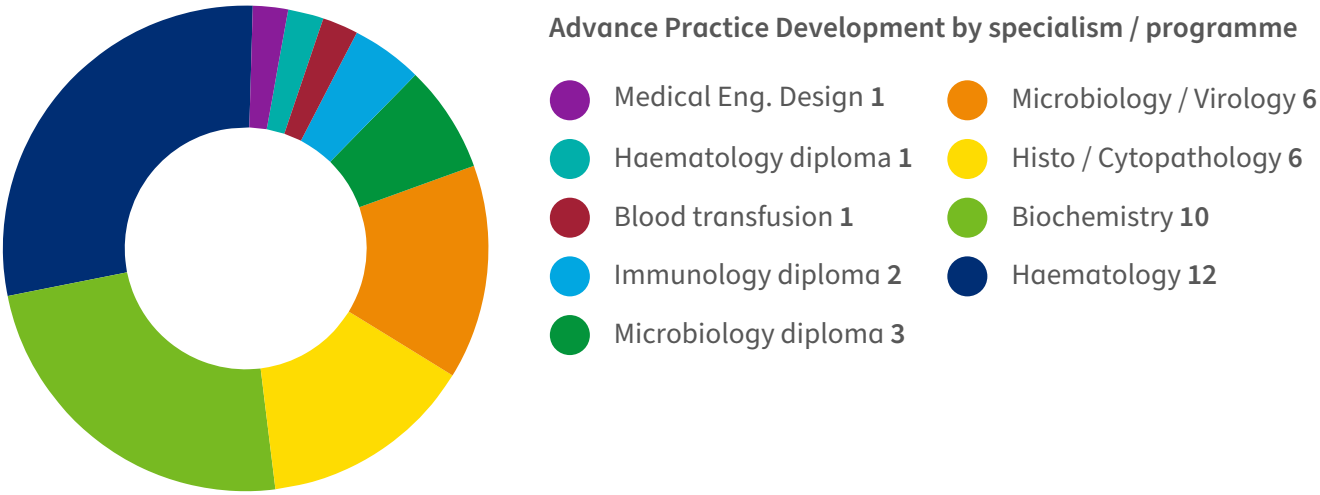

Figure 3: Our cohort of postgraduate Biomedical Scientist in advance practice development by specialism / programme

We draw on external assessors every year who independently scrutinise applications for postgraduate funding. We are indebted to the work of this team. Broadly, they agree the upper and lower third of applications' quality; mid-range scores tend to have greater variation between assessors, so our threshold for acceptance is generally biased lower. The threshold has been tracked over a decade and remains reasonably stable at an application assessment 'pass' score of 50% (Figures 4 and 5).

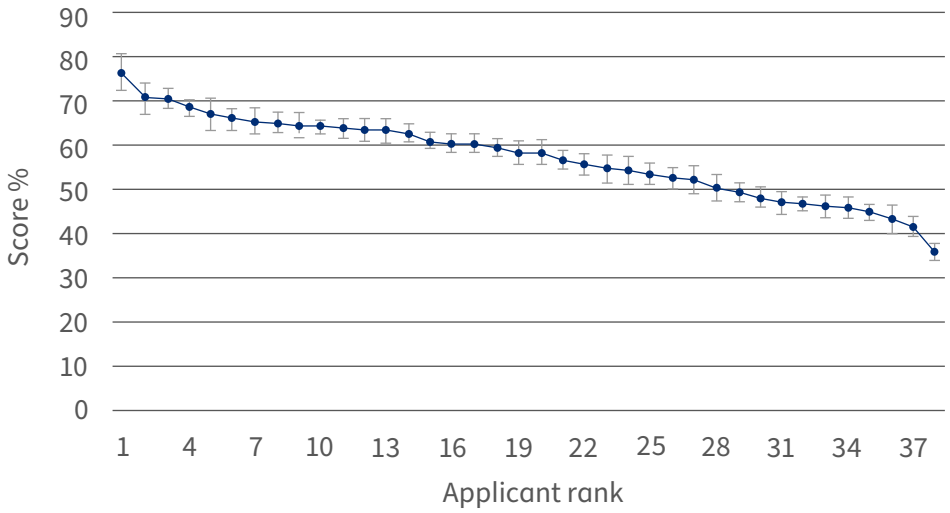

Figure 4: Normalised scores for 2023–24 bursary applicants

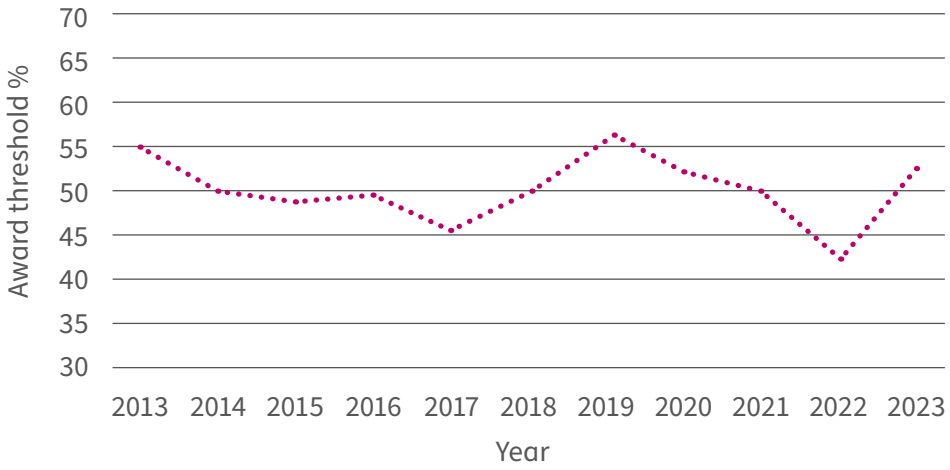

Figure 5: Award threshold percentage from 2013–2023

Equivalence-route Clinical Scientist application fee support

Clinical Scientist registration by equivalence recognition

Equivalence routes are an important alternative pathway for workforce supply. Employers may recruit able science graduates and train them in-house with a tailored training plan. The endpoint assessment is a portfolio and viva, and equivalence leads to HCPC registration.

During 2023–24 we offered support to **18** in-service staff who were nearing the end of training and ready to apply for Clinical Scientist equivalence recognition either via the ACS or the Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS). During this reporting cycle, **16** had progressed to, or were awaiting, final assessment – delays being out with trainees' control and a reflection of the need for Clinical Scientist assessors across a range of specialties for both agencies.

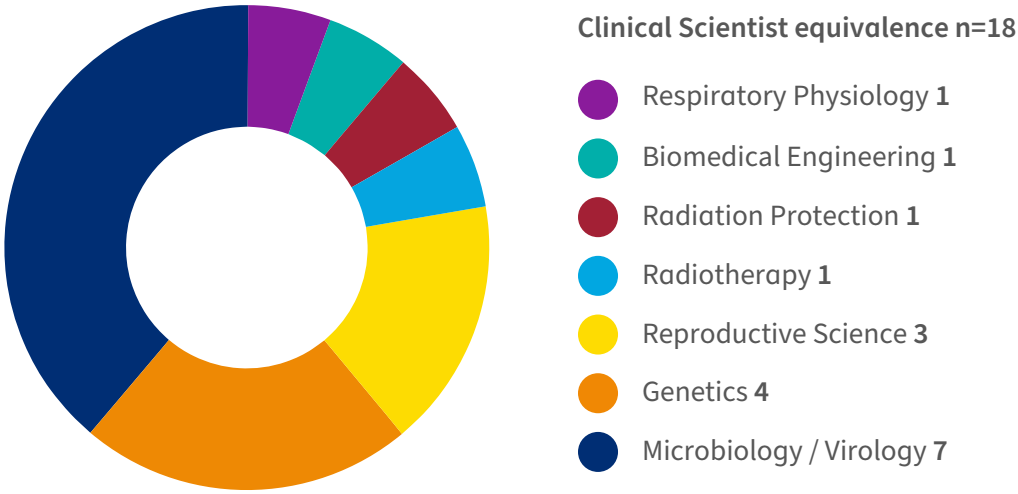

Figure 6: Our cohort of in-service staff going through Clinical Scientist equivalence specialism

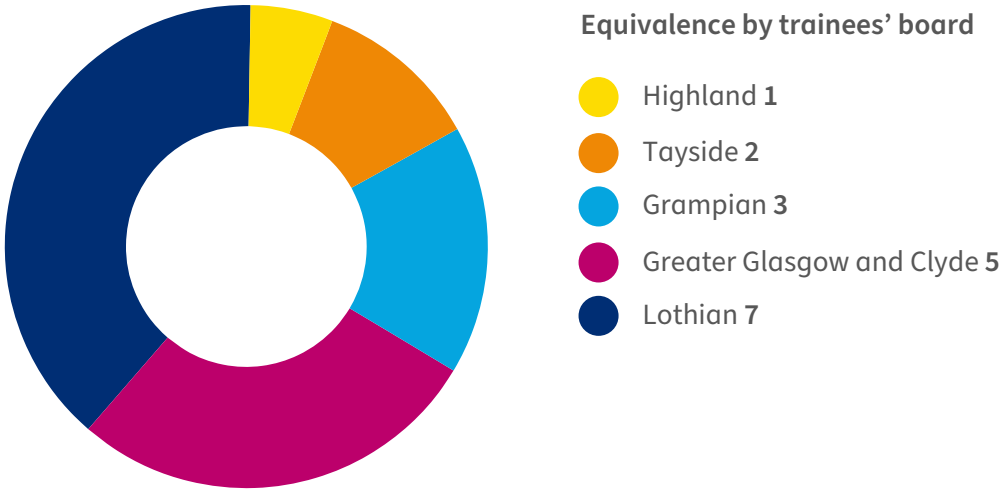

Figure 7: Applications for Clinical Scientist equivalence tend to be concentrated in the larger regional boards within NHSScotland