

FAQs in English for the Academic Fellowship

Who is the Academic Fellowship For?

Q: What is the DFCM Academic Fellowship?

A: The Academic Fellowship program is a rigorous, full time, continuing education program intended to strengthen the practice of Family Medicine and primary care by developing leadership, teaching and research skills of the practitioners.

Q: I am a doctor but not a family physician. Am I eligible?

A: The Academic Fellowship is rooted in Faculty Development for family physicians. However, many other medical specialties have completed the Academic Fellowship. All Fellows must be licensed and practising in their primary country of residence.

Q: I am a non-physician health care provider such as a pharmacist/physiotherapist/occupational therapist/ nurse. can I still do the program?

A: Yes. The Academic Fellowship is rooted in Faculty Development for family physicians however, many non-physician regulated health care practitioners have taken the Academic Fellowship and found it advantageous for their career. All practitioners must be licensed and practising in their primary country of residence.

Q: I am really interested mainly in improving my skills as a clinical educator. Is this a useful program for me?

A: Yes. It is possible within the Academic Fellowship program to concentrate on medical education courses. It is also possible to join one of the shorter programs offered in the Department focussed on medical education – the [Clinical Teacher Certificate](#) and the [Interprofessional Applied Practical Teaching and Learning in the Health Professions](#) (INTAPT) program.

Q: Will this prepare me for a research career?

A: No. There are courses offered in the Academic Fellowship related to research literacy and evidence-based medicine, but this program should not be considered a research-track career preparation program.

Q: How does the Academic Fellowship differ from the [DFCM Graduate Programs](#) (MPH, MScCH)?

A: Much of the content is similar between the Academic Fellowship and MScCH (FCM and HPTE) degrees. The MPH (FCM) degree is more clinical and provides more knowledge and skills for primary care practitioners to integrate public health principles into their clinical practice and setting. The graduate degrees also require demonstration of greater breadth and depth of understanding. Courses are generally graded with letter grades as per the University grading policy. Application for Graduate z:\academic fellowship and grad studies program\promotional materials\2012 af faqs\faqs-academic fellowship_final_jan 22 2013_english.docx

Studies is a completely separate process. Information about applications to the Graduate Programs can be found [here](#).

Eligibility

Q: I am a physician living in Canada but without a license to practice in Canada (ie an IMG). Can I participate in the Academic Fellowship?

A: No. You must be a licensed health professional currently working in the country in which you reside. Non-Canadian residents are eligible only if they provide a letter from their Chair/Department Head that they will be returning to a position in their home country after the Fellowship.

Q: I am a licensed doctor in my home country but I am working in Canada as a paramedic, can I do the program?

A: Yes. The Academic Fellowship is rooted in Faculty Development for family physicians however, many other medical specialties and non-physician regulated health care practitioners have taken the Academic Fellowship. All practitioners must be licensed and practising in their primary country of residence.

Q: I'm only in Canada for 3-6 months. Can I do this program? What other options are available to me?

The minimum amount of time to complete the Academic Fellowship is 12 months. Students with less time available may apply for one or two [individual courses](#) from the Academic Fellowship menu or the [Clinical Teacher Certificate](#). Courses start approximately 1 January, 1 May, 1 July and 1 September and generally extend to four months. July courses are two months long.

Application

Q: How do I apply?

A: Apply via our [website](#).

Q: What documents do I have to submit to be considered for admission?

A: Your complete application package should contain the following:

- Application form
- Your up to date *Curriculum vitae*
- A statement of intent explaining how you hope the Program will meet your needs
- Three references on headed paper, including one from your current Chief/Head of Department
- A statement from your Chief/Head of Department that you have a position to return to after the Program
- Evidence of your proficiency in English through a recognised formal test (see next question)

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If your package is not complete it will not be considered. The Office will email you to let you know what is missing.

Q: What about the English requirement?

A: In order to ensure a basic ability to comprehend academic course material, participate and complete assignments, demonstration of English proficiency, written and verbal, is required for applicants from countries where English is not the primary language. This includes graduates from Universities that have English as their working language.

The Program accepts the [following ESL test scores](#), completed within the past two years. If the English proficiency is borderline, there will be a condition that the University of Toronto [School of Continuing Studies](#) (SCS) Academic English course #0151 be completed prior to starting the Fellowship. If the ESL score is well below the minimum then acceptance into the Fellowship will not be granted.

Q: How long will I wait to hear about my application?

A: When your application is received you will typically receive an acknowledgement within two days. You may be told at that stage that your papers are incomplete and consideration cannot be given until you have sent more documents. You will be told what is missing.

You will then wait for one or two weeks whilst your application is considered by the Program Director. You will then receive either a letter refusing admission or a letter offering you a place together with any conditions that are set. If consideration will take longer than two weeks you will receive an email explaining that more time is needed. The Office gives priority to applications and so this is unusual.

Q: What do I do when I get a letter of offer with conditions? What happens when I have met my conditions?

A: If you get a conditional offer letter you need to meet the conditions before you can start the program. You should work to meet the conditions and let the Office know as you meet each of the conditions set. When you have met all the conditions set and have informed the Fellowship Office you will be sent a letter of confirmation. This gives you detailed information about travelling to Toronto and starting your program. It is really important to meet your conditions and receive the final confirmation letter as this letter sets out the details of your first days in the Program, gives you meeting times and initial course registrations and offers advice about first arriving in Toronto.

Q: Can I defer an acceptance?

An acceptance can be deferred for up to 12 months. Following that a new application must be submitted.

Q: I'm an International Applicant. Should I submit an application to my country's Cultural Bureau or should I apply direct to the Academic Fellowship Office?

A: You should apply directly to the Academic Fellowship Office through the [website](#). There is no advantage to applying via your Cultural Bureau.

Q: I am an International Applicant – can I get an offer of a 12 month Academic Fellowship Program?

A: This is possible. The normal offer is for a 24 month, full time program, but if your English Language skills are strong and you have no other commitments then it may be possible to complete the Program in 12 -15 months. Applicants considering this option should pay careful attention to the course schedules on the DFCM website to judge if they are able to sustain such a heavy workload. It is often easier to shorten the length of a sponsorship than to lengthen it.

Q: Can I get an offer letter to help finalize my scholarship application processing?

A: This is possible. Complete applications are considered shortly after they arrive and a letter of conditional offer may be made just after that. A conditional offer letter will contain some conditions that must be met before an applicant will be allowed to start the Program.

Course Structure and content

Q: What is the difference between a 1 year program and a 2 year program?

The requirements, content and program fee are the same. The question is how able you are to complete the courses in one year (facility with the English language, family commitments, culture adjustment etc.). Two years is generally recommended for all Fellows who do not have English as their first language and also provides additional time to take extra courses or more ambitious practicum projects.

Q: When can I start?

The preferred start date is July 1. September 1 and May 1 are also permissible start dates. A January start is not offered.

Q: What are the Fellowship courses/requirements?

A: See the Program web site [here](#).

Q: Are any of the courses on –line?

A: One of the courses is run on-line via the University Portal, an interactive learning environment. All the other courses are traditional in-class learning. Some run in a modular format such as a full week of class room study followed by home work but most run weekly over the length of a term.

Q: Can I take any of the courses from my home country?

A: No. This is not possible, the course requires you to be physically in Toronto for the full duration of the Fellowship. The only exception is the Practicum which may, depending on the topic, be completed away from Toronto. Any student considering this must speak to the Program Director well in advance of starting their Practicum work.

Q: How are the courses graded?

A: All the standard Academic Fellowship courses are graded pass/fail. Most courses are graded based on a combination of a learning contract (paper outlines), mid and final term papers, presentation and participation.

Q: Once I am in the program can I influence it?

A: Academic Fellows have the opportunity to provide informal feedback to the Program Director at any time. There are also opportunities to provide formal program feedback twice per year. Evaluations are formally completed by Fellows after every course and feedback is often provided by Fellows informally at many courses sessions.

Q: What resources are available to me as a student in the program?

A: Fellows have access to a specialist family medicine library at DFCM with professional Librarian medical information specialists; the University Robarts Library specialist library and expert staff, University of Toronto email address; access to course materials via a closed server, specialist extra-syllabus courses on avoidance of plagiarism, literature searching and other scholarly activities; cultural and academic orientation and access to UofT resources for international students.

Q: Can I attend courses and conferences outside of the program?

A: We encourage Fellows to attend appropriate conferences and meetings while they are in the Fellowship. Ideally they will be presenting their academic work at some meetings. Financial support for the costs of attending such conferences are not included in the Academic Fellowship fee but are often provided by Fellows' own sponsors. Attendance at conferences should not interfere with Academic Fellowship course and practicum work.

Q: What if I fail a course? Can I have a second chance?

A: Failure to pass a course in the Fellowship will most likely result in dismissal from the Fellowship. Refunds of the program fee will not be granted. If a Fellow fails, or is noted to be at risk of failing a course, then the Program Director will work with the Fellow and Course Instructor to create the best conditions for success. Fellows who are struggling are always strongly encouraged to seek assistance from the Program Director sooner rather than later.

Q: What will I receive following completion of the Academic Fellowship?

A: Successful completion of all components of the Academic Fellowship will result in a *Certificate of Completion* from the Office of Continuing Education and Professional Development (CEPD) of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto. All parts of the Program must be successfully completed to receive the certificate.

Q: Is it possible to transfer from the Academic Fellowship to a Graduate Degree Program?

A: It is possible to do this, but the application process is completely separate and is managed by another Institution within the University. If a Fellow finds that they are considering a move they must speak to the Program Director before the end of the first term of the Fellowship.

Fees and Funding

Q: What do the fees cover?

A: The fees for the Academic Fellowship cover attendance at all university courses, meetings with Program Directors, normal office materials and photocopying costs in the Department, access to selected University facilities including the Robarts Library and a university email address and, by agreement with the Program Director, attendance at external courses taken as part of the program. In general the program fee covers the full cost of undertaking the Academic Fellowship. Attendance at external conferences, purchase of books and materials etc are often covered by sponsors. Accommodation and maintenance costs are required separately.

Q: Is there funding for Fellows?

A: Most international applicants are sponsored by their home institution. A fees bursary may be provided for international applicants from selected targeted countries. If an international applicant does not have funding, they may choose to take [individual courses](#) or the [Clinical Teacher Certificate \(CTC\)](#). Canadian applicants who are Faculty in the DFCM may be eligible for 2/3 financial support through their hospital Chief and the DFCM central department. Please see the [“Fees”](#) section of our website for more information.

Q: Are there external sources of funding for Fellows that they can apply for in Toronto?

A: There are no reliable sources of funding for International Fellows to apply for in Toronto. Canadian Fellows have access to a variety of local loans and can apply for grants for which they are eligible. [This](#) website is a good starting point.

Fellowships and Employment/Clinical Practice

Q: I am a non-Canadian health practitioner. Can I practice clinically during my fellowship?

In order to practice clinically you need a license from the College and Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO). Our Academic Fellows typically come to Canada on a study permit. Clinical experiences in these situations are limited to observerships. If you are concurrently enrolled in a clinical fellowship through z:\academic fellowship and grad studies program\promotional materials\2012 af faqs\faqs-academic fellowship_final_jan 22 2013_english.docx

the postgraduate program (see **Q: What about clinical fellowships** below) you will have a work permit and a CPSO educational license to practice for the duration of the clinical fellowship.

Q: What about clinical fellowships?

The DFCM has several enhanced skills clinical fellowships for family physicians. Many of these fellowships are very competitive. Please note: this is a completely separate application and admission process from the Academic Fellowship. The application deadline is October annually. Please see the following link for more information:

<http://www.dfc.utoronto.ca/prospectivelearners/prosres/pgy3.htm>

International physicians must complete the Academic Fellowship as a prerequisite for any DFCM Clinical Fellowship.

Leave and Pastoral Arrangements

Q: Can I take vacations during the Program?

A: The University is closed every year in December/January for approximately 2 weeks for the Christmas break. A Fellow is permitted to take 2 weeks of vacation in addition to this per year. Timing of the vacation must be approved by the Program Director. The University of Toronto will accommodate [religious holidays](#). It is important to be aware that attendance at all course sessions is otherwise considered mandatory.

Q: What about Parental leave/sick leave

A: The Academic Fellowship Program is an intensive course. Students suffering long term illness are advised to withdraw and begin the program again when they are recovered. Program Fees will be held over until they are in a position to re-start.

For short term illness and other family emergencies a maximum of two weeks leave over the full duration of the program is permitted. Students who find themselves needing to take time away should contact their Program Director at the earliest opportunity. Appropriate documentation may be required.

Maternity leave may be granted of up to 12 months. Paternal leave of one month may be granted. Students should inform the Program Director in advance of their proposed leave dates.

Q: Will this program help me get my Canadian CPSO license/ a residency place/ a job teaching medical students?

A: No. The academic fellowship is not designed to prepare for a residency position or enhance an application for a residency position. Questions about Family Medicine residency positions for IMGs at the University of Toronto can be directed to the [DFCM IMG Coordinator](#).

Q: How do I get health insurance?

A: International learners must have their own private health insurance. Fellows and their families are eligible for UHIP cover (Universities Health Insurance Plan). For information see the UHIP [website](#).

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