

Public health academic

Public health academics influence and guide policy-makers in tackling public health challenges, professional practice and research.

Overview

Public health academics usually work in universities or colleges of further education, both in the UK and abroad. They typically set up research investigations to address specific public health issues. They may also teach about public health theories and practice. Their day-to-day work is likely to consist of: teaching; assessing and examining students' work; researching public health issues; and sharing the results of their work.

They work across all three 'domains' of [public health](#) ^[1]: health improvement; health protection; and healthcare public health.

meeting in progress

Public health academic roles

The following are examples of the variety of academic public health roles available.

- [Research assistant in public health](#)
- [Academic clinical fellow in public health](#)
- [Research fellow in public health](#)
- [Clinical lecturer in public health](#)
- [Lecturer in public health](#)
- [Head of school of public health](#)

Research assistant in public health

As a research assistant, you'd usually be appointed to work on one or more research projects as part of a team, and are likely to report to the principal investigator or research manager. Duties may include:

- collecting and analysing data relevant to the project
- undertaking reviews of scholarly literature

- assisting in the preparation of research reports and papers for publication in academic journals
- liaising with external bodies to exchange information and to organise fieldwork
- ensuring that accurate documentation is kept for all work
- ensuring that all policies and processes (including [quality assurance](#) ^[2]) are adhered to

Your research project work may also contribute to your own research, as you work towards a higher degree or doctorate (eg Master's, PhD, DPhil).

Academic clinical fellow in public health

Working as an academic clinical fellow (ACF) in public health, you'll be part of a programme that includes both training in the specialty of public health and training in being an academic researcher and teacher. Posts are usually held for a maximum of three years (full-time equivalent). About one quarter of the time spent in training will be devoted to training in research and education; the remainder to training in public health. Such fellowships are ideally suited to those who have had little formal academic training and are committed to a career in academia. It's likely you'll be supported to prepare an application for funding to undertake a higher degree (usually a PhD) when the fellowship has come to an end. Recruitment is through open competition nationally. This process is run by the [National Institute for Health Research](#) ^[3] (NIHR).

[Find out more about academic clinical fellowships](#) ^[4].

Research fellow in public health

As a research fellow, generally you'll hold a PhD in a topic related to public health (eg [stroke](#) ^[5] research, mental health, obesity, health and wellbeing). One of your main responsibilities is to work with the research board and department staff at a particular institution to develop an on-going research agenda. You are often required to apply for funds for research projects (which may include some or all of your own salary for the period of the project), oversee how projects are implemented once approved, and ensure that the research project delivers on its agreed outputs on time. You'll write research reports and prepare papers for publication in academic journals or presentation at conferences. You may also work directly with other research teams and undertake some teaching duties.

Clinical lecturer in public health

If you're working as a clinical lecturer (CL) in public health you'll have completed a research doctorate or equivalent and show outstanding potential for continuing a career in academia. Being a clinical lecturer provides training in both the specialty of public health and academic research. The training tends to be divided equally between the two components. Posts are held for a maximum of four years (full time equivalent), and post-holders are encouraged to apply for funding to undertake post-doctoral research or educationalist training when the position comes to an end. Clinical lecturers are recruited through open competition nationally. The process is run by the [National Institute for Health Research](#) ^[3] (NIHR).

Lecturer in public health

If you're a lecturer in public health, you'll generally be expected to undertake teaching (through lectures, seminars and tutorials) and research. You may be coordinating course programmes (such as a Master's programme in Public Health) and may be expected to contribute to the delivery of courses co-ordinated by others. You are likely to supervise students studying for their degree and those working towards post-graduate qualifications. You'll have some autonomy to pursue your own research interests (within the context of your employer's research priorities), apply for grants to support your research, and publish your findings in academic journals, or present them at regional, national and international conferences. You'll need to keep up to date in your particular area of expertise as a clinical lecturer, by attending conferences and working in partnership with colleagues. You may also be involved in the business planning and objective-setting in the academic department where you work.

Head of School of Public Health

Heads of school of public health lead the ongoing development and [quality assurance](#) ^[2] of regional public health specialist training schemes, for example, by ensuring that training placements provide suitable experiences so that trainees acquire the necessary competences.

The head of the school is responsible for overseeing both the formal academic training done by trainees (eg reviewing the quality of trainees' Master of Public Health (MPH) programme) as well as working with trainers who provide mentoring and supervision for trainees in their work placements.

Want to find out more?

- [Find out more about the working life of a public health academic](#) ^[6]
- [Find out more about the entry requirements for public health academic](#) ^[7]
- [Find out more about the skills and interests required to be a public health academic](#) ^[8]
- [Find out more about training and development for public health academics](#) ^[9]

• Pay and conditions

Pay and conditions are likely to vary depending on academic experience and achievement. In higher education, most institutions have agreed to follow a single pay structure. [More information about salaries in further and higher education](#) ^[10].

Working hours can be long, but are often flexible, so that staff may choose the timing of their teaching sessions and manage their own research and administration. In England, higher education institutions increasingly expect their staff to generate sufficient research of high enough quality that they can be entered for the [Research Excellence Framework](#) ^[11] (REF). The REF is an initiative held about every five years that provides a basis on which the [Higher Education Funding Council](#) ^[12] (HEFC) distributes funds for research.

Example salaries:

Lecturer in food and nutritional sciences: £39,324-£48,327 (University of Reading, 2017)

Lecturer/assistant lecturer in food quality and regulation: £39,324-£55,998 (University of Reading, 2017)

Senior lecturer in environmental health: £41,709-£48,327 (Leeds Beckett University, 2017)

Lecturer/senior lecturer in public health: £33,943 - £48,327 (University of Brighton, 2017)

Research fellow in epidemiology ^[13]: £40,030 - £52,350 (Imperial College London, 2017)

Public health research assistant: £20,781 - £24,774pa (Liverpool John Moores University, 2014)

Academic clinical fellowship (ACF) in public health medicine: £30,002 - £47,175 (University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust/University of Leicester, 2014)

Academic clinical fellowship (ACF) in dental public health: £30,002 - £47,175 (Health Education Yorkshire and the Humber, 2014)

Research fellow in public health: £39,100 - £51,200pa (Imperial College London, 2014) |
Lecturer in public health: £45,950 - £51,200 (Imperial College London, 2014)

Senior lecturer (public health): £48,743 - £54,841pa (Open University, 2014)

Senior lecturer/reader in Health Economics: £56,450pa (Imperial College, London, 2014)

Professor of public health & evidence in communicable disease epidemiology ^[13]:
£75,000-101,000

Senior clinical teaching fellow in public health medicine/honorary consultant in public health: £75,000-101,000 (University of Leicester, 2014)

• Where the role can lead

The standard progression is from researcher to lecturer, senior lecturer (or reader), to professor. Some universities in the UK have adopted the title “associate professor” for Lecturer, and “full professor” for professor.

• Job market and vacancies

England

An estimate in a report on the core public health workforce (2014) ^[14], was that between 200-300 people work as public health academics in England. However, this estimate primarily relates to senior academics based at universities with medical and dental schools; therefore, actual numbers may well be higher.

Scotland

An estimate in a report on the core public health workforce in Scotland in 2015 ^[15], was that at least 360 people work as public health academics in Scotland. Of these, 247 were identified as working in the main medical universities offering a Master's degree in public health, and 112 at other universities.

Where to look for job vacancies

- www.jobs.ac.uk ^[16]
- Academic Positions ^[17]
- Oriel ^[18] - for academic clinical fellowships
- Royal Society for Public Health ^[19]

• Further information

- NIHR Integrated Academic Training for Doctors and Dentists ^[20]
- AGCAS: Getting the first lecturing job ^[21]

Other roles that may interest you

- Public health knowledge and intelligence professional ^[22]
- Public health consultants and specialists ^[23]
- Knowledge and library services ^[24]
- Experienced paramedic ^[25]

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/roles-public-health/public-health-academic>

Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/careers-public-health/what-public-health> [2]
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<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/working-health/clinical-academic-careers/clinical-academic->

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