

# Frequently Asked Questions

## SCTR TL1 (T32) Pre-doctoral Clinical & Translational Research Training Program

### **What is the TL1 Pre-doctoral Clinical & Translational Research Training Program?**

The SCTR TL1 is a full-time, NIH-funded mentored research training program for pre-doctoral students in PhD or dual-degree programs. It aims to increase the number of well-trained translational researchers by stimulating interest from doctoral students in health- and disease-related disciplines who will become future research leaders.

The TL1 program is meant for students with a strong interest in pursuing a career in clinical and/or translational research and provides early exposure to clinical and translational research methodology through experiential training and an instructive curriculum.

TL1 trainees pursue research training on a full-time basis. Trainees may not work outside of their research area.

### **What are the basic requirements to be a TL1 trainee?**

- Full-time student enrolled in a PhD or combined degree program:
  - PhD
  - MD/PhD
  - PharmD/PhD
  - DMD/PhD
- US citizen, non-citizen national, or lawful permanent resident at the time of appointment
- Students with a strong interest in clinical and/or translational research

Trainees from all disciplines (pre-clinical, clinical, and translational) are welcome to apply. Individuals from underrepresented groups, disadvantaged backgrounds, and/or with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply.

### **Who is not eligible for the TL1 program?**

- Students completing a professional clinical degree *only* (e.g. MD, DMD, DPT, PharmD)
- Individuals who have been previously awarded a doctoral degree
- Students currently supported by other federal funds (unless federal funding is terminated by August 31, 2020)
- Individuals on temporary or student visas

### **What is the length of appointment to the TL1 program?**

Appointment to the TL1 program is for a period of 1 year with the potential for a second year pending satisfactory progress. Per NIH guidelines, no individual trainee may receive more than 5 years of aggregate NRSA support at the pre-doctoral level.

### **Will the TL1 program extend my graduation date?**

No. Trainees in the TL1 program do not incur any extra time to graduation, and successfully complete their degree programs in the same amount of time as other students.

### **What are the benefits of the TL1 program?**

The TL1 program provides trainees mentored exposure to clinical and translational research methodology and team science. Through experiential learning and instructive curriculum, trainees will learn about the continuum from basic

research to how discoveries are disseminated into improved health care. Trainees also get to experience the real-world translation of research into practice through clinical observation and mentoring.

#### Research Funding

- **Stipend support\*** at the [NRSA-established levels](#) for pre-doctoral trainees. Mentors are required to supplement the trainee's stipend up to the amount required by their respective colleges.
- **\$16,000** in tuition & fees for PhD students; **\$21,000** for students in a combined dual-degree program (Fall & Spring only)
- **\$4,200** of project funds & training-related expenses (including student health insurance)
- **\$1,500** in travel funds for travel to the Association for Clinical and Translational Science (ACTS) national meeting and visit to Capitol Hill in Washington, DC

#### Research Guidance

- Mentorship in your area of research
- Support and regular updates with program leadership
- Access to SCTR/OCR research staff, including SUCCESS Center consults in research navigation, biostatistics, recruitment, REDCap, regulatory issues, grant budgets, and research opportunities and development

#### Research Career Development

- Assistance with protocol creation – completing a regulatory review, constructing a Prospective Reimbursement Analysis (PRA), complying with the NIH Public Access Policy (publications in PubMed Central)
- Customized Individual Development Plan (IDP) to guide future career progress
- Support with writing a competitive NRSA fellowship grant application
- Training and support for making scientific presentations

#### Research Experience

- Real-world clinical exposure working alongside clinical mentors in your field of research (Translational Science Clinic)
- Exploration of thought-provoking case studies from both a clinical and research perspective (Translational Medicine Seminars)
- A novel team-based journal club that explores the translation of basic science discoveries into practice (TL1 Journal Club)
- Opportunities to present your science before peers and thought leaders (ACTS meeting, MUSC Translational Research Day). Second-year awardees can attend and present at the conference of their choosing

\*Note: Trainees receive stipends related to their academic programs. They do not render services for pay, and therefore are *not considered employees* and are not eligible to pay into the state retirement system, nor will they accrue vacation or service credits for the length of the award period. Monthly stipends for fellowships may be subject to federal, state and local taxes. Depending on a fellow's residency status, their taxes may or may not be withheld from their stipend. Questions regarding taxes or stipends should be directed to Redell Sherrill, SCTR Business Office, 843-792-8259 or [sherrillr@musc.edu](mailto:sherrillr@musc.edu).

### How is the SCTR TL1 program different from other T32 programs?

The SCTR TL1 program is unique as it provides career development and training opportunities for trainees from various disciplines, colleges, and research areas. By not focusing on a specific disease area, TL1 trainees are able to work and collaborate with students in similar career stages but with different perspectives. The program provides valuable networking opportunities with other TL1 trainees and researchers throughout MUSC and the nationwide CTSA consortium. Trainees engage in numerous professional development activities and learning opportunities along the translational research continuum from T0 (basic science) through T4 (public health). Students in the TL1 have access to training in areas that they may not otherwise be exposed to, including seeing research results “in action” in a clinical setting.

### What are the program requirements for TL1 trainees?

The TL1 program expands on the CGS curriculum through research-focused coursework and experiential learning. Along with standard courses in proposal writing, rigor and reproducibility, and basic concepts in biomedical science, TL1 trainees take supplemental courses to enhance predoctoral students’ research training experience.

TL1 Curriculum	
Essentials of Scientific Practice III ( <i>Grant Writing</i> ) (CGS 712)	Online Team Science Course (MCR 752)
Translational Medicine Seminars (CGS 716)*	Translational Research Journal Club (CGS 815)*
Designing Rigorous Research (CGS 727)	Translational Science Clinic (CGS 871)*
Principals, Practices, and Professionalism (CGS 770)	Month in the Research Nexus (CGS 832)*
Career Development Conference	

\*unique to TL1 program

Trainees must also satisfy the degree requirements of their individual colleges/programs. The use of a trainee’s specific college requirements to satisfy TL1 programmatic requirements will be determined on an individual basis. While appointed to the TL1, trainees must remain in good academic standing (minimum cumulative GPA of 3.00) while making reasonable progress toward their graduate degree.

Additionally, trainees are expected to:

- Participate in required professional development opportunities, including MUSC Translational Research Day, Annual Mentorship Training Symposium, and the ACTS Conference.
- Attend quarterly program progress meetings.
- Cite the TL1 grant on all TL1 funded projects/papers: Any publications that are produced during the award year or future publications related to the TL1 funded project must cite the grant support of the TL1 award and follow the NIH public access policy. Trainees are expected to have at least one first author publication upon completion of the requirements for their PhD degree.
- Obtain an ORCID ID.
- Complete NIH annual progress report documents.
- Participate in the NIH required 15-year follow up: As part of NIH reporting requirements, recipients of the TL1 must comply with yearly information requests for 15 years upon completion of their award (even after departure from MUSC).

### Do I have to have a mentor on the TL1?

Yes. The applicant is expected to identify a mentor in their area of research interest and work with them in all aspects of their TL1 training, starting with the application process. Both mentors and trainees will read and sign the AAMC *Compact between Biomedical Graduate Students and Their Research Advisors*, paying special attention to the Commitments of Graduate Students and Commitments of Research Advisors.

**The mentor must have independent funding for the duration of the applicant's TL1 appointment and for future years to cover the anticipated time for completion of the PhD degree.**

### **What are the mentor requirements?**

Under guidance and editing from the mentor, the applicant should develop their proposal that describes the research project to be undertaken. The mentor will guide and encourage the design and execution of an original, high quality, dissertation research project. Mentors will provide guidance on the following documents and activities, including but not limited to:

- TL1 application
- Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- Progress reports
- Manuscripts
- Abstracts/posters/presentations

Additionally, mentors provide career development and counseling by meeting with trainees regularly (at least weekly), attending required meetings/activities organized by SCTR, including the trainee as an author on relevant publications/posters/presentations, and helping the trainee apply for post-TL1 funding. **Mentors are also required to ensure that the trainee's department is supplementing the TL1 stipend up to the amount required by their respective colleges.**

Quality mentorship is fundamental to influencing trainees' productivity in research, informed career decision-making, networking, career trajectory, and career satisfaction. In addition to the responsibilities discussed above, mentors are required to:

- Ensure that the projected time supported by the award is being met.
- Promote all ethical standards for conducting research, including compliance with institutional and federal regulations as they relate to responsible conduct in research. The mentor shall clearly define expectations for research conduct and be available to discuss ethical concerns as they arise.
- Ensure that the mentee has sufficient opportunities to acquire the skills necessary for a career in clinical and translational research.
- Seek the assistance of other faculty and departmental/institutional resources when necessary.
- Encourage the mentee to interact with fellow scientists both intra- and extramurally, including at professional meetings to network and present research findings.
- Support the trainee as they transition into the next stage of their career and beyond.
- Seek opportunities to enhance one's own mentoring skills, including attending SCTR's Annual Mentorship Training Symposium.

### **Can I be appointed for more than one year?**

Yes. Current trainees are eligible to compete for a second year of support as long as their anticipated graduation date is after May 31, 2021.

### **How do I apply for the TL1 program?**

All applications will be submitted online using the InfoReady application portal. Please see the "Application FAQs" document on the TL1 program website (<https://research.musc.edu/resources/sctr/funding-opportunities/training-program>) for detailed instructions on the steps and processes for applying.

Applicants should be prepared to submit the following materials when applying to the TL1:

- Current NIH biosketch (5 pages) and CV
- Primary mentor's NIH biosketch (5 pages) and training table
- Summary of Undergraduate/Graduate Research Experience
- Career Development Plan (1 page)
- Research Plan (3 pages)
- Letter of Support from primary mentor and department/division chair (1 page/each)
- Essay of Interest (1 page)
- Progress Report\* (3 pages) – *trainees applying for a second year only*

**Who do I contact for more information?**

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