Job Description for NIHR Academic Clinical Fellowship in Plastic Surgery (Clinical Education Research Theme) ST3

1. **Job Title:** Academic Clinical Fellow in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery

2. Duration of post: 3 years.

3. Research institutions in which training will take place:
Royal Free Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and the Charles Wolfson Centre for Reconstructive Surgery, Royal Free Campus, Division of Surgery and Interventional Science, University College London.

4. Timetabling of clinical and research time:
The duration of the post will be split between 25% academic and 75% clinical training across the three-year duration of the post, equating on an annual basis to approximately 9 months clinical and 3 months academic/research.

A mutually agreed timetable will be devised in consultation with the academic candidate and their academic/clinical supervisors to ensure overall training goals are met. The 25% academic and 75% clinical split will be guided by the proposed research project and whether protected blocks of time, or weekly research sessions, are more appropriate.

5. Description of research component of programme:
This post sits within the NIHR Integrated Academic Training priority theme of Clinical Education Research, which concerns the education, training and professional development of clinicians and clinical teams. The ACF will develop a research portfolio of clinical trials, feasibility and validity studies in surgical education and training, incorporating novel techniques of feedback and assessment. Working within an established team, the fellow will contribute to prospective studies in reconstructive plastic surgery aimed at improving surgical skill acquisition and widening access to training through simulation. A central strand is the use of electroencephalography (EEG) decoding and machine learning to assess performance: a non-invasive EEG headset is used to measure a learner's mental workload, an approach previously applied by the team in the neuro-rehabilitation of stroke patients, providing objective, data-driven feedback that can tailor training to the individual, monitor progress, and address variability in assessment under different working conditions.

The fellow will have the option to lead validity and feasibility projects across remote and face-to-face surgical simulation, working in collaboration with Cogitat, a machine learning and artificial intelligence company. They will also take a key role in educational research and delivery at undergraduate and postgraduate level and are expected to bring significant prior experience or qualifications in medical education and the conduct of clinical trials. Building on departmental work that has validated synthetic materials for surgical training, designed and delivered basic and advanced reconstructive skills curricula in both virtual and face-to-face settings, and studied robotic reconstructive skills training and its barriers to clinical implementation, the fellow will demonstrate and develop expertise in

orchestrating large-scale feasibility studies and in AI applications within healthcare, alongside generic academic skills in statistical analysis, critical appraisal and systematic review, and an understanding of regulatory, economic and ethical issues.

An innovative, interdisciplinary approach underpins the programme: combining EEG monitoring with machine learning allows the physical and mental workload of a trainee to be identified, so that teaching can be tailored, progress monitored and learning made more efficient. Applied first in virtual-reality and bench-model simulation and progressing into workplace-based learning, the work is designed to widen access to high-quality simulation training and, while focused on plastic and reconstructive surgery (including surgeons, physician associates and junior doctors), is expandable across other surgical specialties.

The programme draws on a strong, well-resourced research environment. An ongoing collaboration between the UCL Division of Surgery, the UCL Surgical & Interventional Trials Unit (SITU) and the UCL Comprehensive Clinical Trials Unit provides support in complex trial design, health economics, statistics and laboratory-based research, and a dedicated simulation suite and wet lab support internal and external surgical skills training. The centre has been awarded funding from the NIHR, MRC, SRUK, RFC, HEE, RCS, TSB, ASiT, BSSH, BAPRAS and the department hosts UCL MSc programmes at the Royal Free Hospital — Burns, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery; Nanotechnology and Regenerative Medicine; Aesthetic (Surgical); and Aesthetic (Non-Surgical) — which the ACF may enrol in, the candidate will ideally have or gain educational qualifications such as Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA) or other certification. The fellow will be expected to apply for nationally competitive research grants and external career development fellowships during the post.

6. Description of clinical training component of programme:
This ACF will be a 3-year appointment that will run through into clinical training, subject to satisfactory completion of competences. The clinical training of the ACF will be in line with non-academic Specialist Trainees, with an additional 25% of their time protected as research time as indicated above. During their ACF time they will be expected to maintain clinical standards equivalent to their non-academic contemporaries.

The ACF will be based at the Royal Free Hospital in the first instance but will rotate through other Plastic Surgery departments in the region. Over the three-year training programme, the ACF will gain exposure to all areas of Plastic Surgery and will be expected to acquire surgical skills in both elective and emergency settings, in line with their non-academic contemporaries. The ACF will be expected to attend the Regional Training Programme and to take an active role in the teaching programme, and will have access to the core plastic surgery courses (e.g. ATLS, BAPRAS/BSSH courses). Clinical progress will be assessed through the ARCP process.

Applications are welcome from doctors already in Plastic Surgery specialty training who hold a National Training Number (NTN). Existing trainees apply through the national ACF round in open competition. The ACF is a pre-doctoral post: trainees who already hold a doctorate (PhD/MD), or who are too advanced in training for the fellowship to be accommodated before CCT, would normally

be directed to the Clinical Lectureship (CL) route rather than an ACF. For further information contact recruitment lead.

7. Academic Programme Director name
Prof Peter Butler
Prof Nick Watkin nick.watkin@nhs.net (Academic TPD)
Prof Dan Leff d.leff@imperial.ac.uk (Academic TPD)

8. Clinical Programme Director name
Miss Helen McEvoy

9. Programme contact for further information (phone or email)
Prof Peter Butler - peter.butler1@nhs.net

10. NHSE contact:
Specialty Team https://lasepgmdesupport.hee.nhs.uk/support/home
Recruitment Enquiries - https://lasepgmdesupport.hee.nhs.uk/support/home

11. Useful websites for further information IAT Guide | NIHR
https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/academy-programmes/integrated-academic-training.htm

12. Confirmation that the post attracts an NTN (A) - YES

This job description was prepared on 12th August 2026