

# A Supportive and Scalable Model to Enable Experienced Consultants in Psychiatry to Engage in Research and Academic Work

## A proposal paper

### 1. Introduction

Despite a strong appetite among many experienced consultants in psychiatry to contribute to teaching, research, and academic leadership, the pathways to engage later in one's career remain unclear and often inaccessible. This paper outlines a practical, supportive, and sustainable model to enable consultants—regardless of previous academic experience—to participate meaningfully in scholarship and academic activity.

The proposal is aligned with the values and ambitions of the **Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych) Academic Faculty**, which advocates broadening access to academic participation across the psychiatric workforce.

---

### 2. Rationale

#### 2.1 Untapped Expertise Within the Consultant Workforce

Consultants bring decades of accumulated clinical wisdom, service development insight, and supervisory experience. When mobilised into academia, this can enrich:

- undergraduate and postgraduate teaching
- research grounded in real-world service needs
- quality improvement and evidence-based practice
- collaborative partnerships between clinical services and academic bodies

#### 2.2 Barriers to Engagement

Common systemic barriers include:

- lack of protected time
- uncertainty about how to “start” an academic portfolio
- limited confidence in research skills
- fragmented access to university partners

- administrative and governance burdens
- perception that academic engagement is only for early-career researchers

## 2.3 National Professional Support

The **RCPsych Academic Faculty** provides a national framework dedicated to improving academic participation across psychiatry. The Faculty promotes widening access, inclusive academic cultures, and career-long opportunities. Integrating this proposal with Faculty support ensures clarity of standards, visibility, and professional recognition.

---

## 3. Aim of the Model

To offer a **structured, supportive, and flexible academic “on-ramp”** for experienced consultants by providing:

- accessible opportunities tailored to time and confidence
  - mentorship and supervision
  - small, achievable academic tasks
  - clearly defined stages of involvement
  - connection to national academic networks and recognition pathways
- 

## 4. Proposed Three-Tier Model

### Tier 1: Exposure and Orientation

*For consultants exploring academic interest with minimal commitment.*

#### Key elements:

- Introductory workshops on research methods, teaching skills, and academic writing
- Access to a named academic contact
- Opportunities to participate in low-intensity tasks (e.g., guest teaching, reviewing audits, small contributions to ongoing projects)

#### Intended outcomes:

Confidence-building and awareness of opportunities.

---

### Tier 2: Supported Participation

*For consultants wishing to contribute regularly with modest protected time.*

#### Key elements:

- 0.25–0.5 PA/week protected time
- Participation in small-scale research, evaluation, or education projects
- Co-supervision of trainees or students
- Mentorship from an academic psychiatrist or educator
- Support navigating governance and ethics processes

**Intended outcomes:**

Early academic outputs; development of academic skills; increased integration with academic teams.

---

### **Tier 3: Academic Consolidation**

*For consultants intending to establish a sustained academic portfolio.*

**Key elements:**

- 0.5–1 PA/week protected time
- Lead or co-lead on service-linked studies or educational initiatives
- Collaborator on grant applications
- Opportunities for honorary academic titles (e.g., lecturer, educator roles)
- Support for postgraduate qualifications if desired

**Intended outcomes:**

Regular output, leadership influence, and long-term academic identity.

---

## **5. Required Infrastructure**

### **5.1 Academic Liaison Function**

A nominated individual or small team within each organisation to:

- match consultants with appropriate opportunities
- coordinate mentorship and supervision
- support project alignment with organisational priorities

### **5.2 Mentorship Network**

A pool of academic mentors drawn from psychiatrists, psychologists, methodologists, and educators to ensure consultants receive the support required at each tier.

### **5.3 Protected Time Framework**

A locally negotiated, flexible approach to protected academic time that recognises varying levels of involvement and personal capacity.

## 5.4 Academic Project Repository

A bank of pre-scoped, small, manageable academic activities, such as:

- literature reviews
- small evaluation studies
- educational modules
- co-authorship opportunities
- contributions to workforce, training, or service-based scholarship

## 5.5 Royal College Partnership

The RCPsych Academic Faculty would provide national alignment and support by:

- extending access to Faculty resources, networks, and events
- offering academic mentorship and national networking opportunities
- promoting equitable and inclusive routes into academic activity
- supporting dissemination of outputs through Faculty meetings and conferences
- recognising consultant achievements through national platforms

This partnership anchors the model in a respected professional framework and ensures consistency across regions and organisations.

---

# 6. Evaluation and Quality Assurance

Evaluation should focus on:

- participation rates across the three tiers
  - academic outputs (publications, teaching sessions, presentations, projects)
  - consultant satisfaction and confidence
  - impact on trainee experience
  - strengthened collaboration between clinical services and academic bodies
- 

# 7. Benefits

## For Consultants

- Accessible academic engagement
- Enhanced teaching and research skills
- Career diversification and professional fulfilment
- Recognition within the College framework

## For Trainees and Workforce Development

- Access to a richer pool of supervisors and educators
- Improved research culture
- More evidence-informed practice

### For Organisations

- Stronger academic partnerships
- Increased capacity for service evaluation and improvement
- Enhanced reputation for supporting scholarship

### For the Royal College of Psychiatrists

- Delivery on the Academic Faculty's ambition to widen participation
  - Broader representation within academic psychiatry
  - Greater national impact of consultant-led scholarship
- 

## 8. Conclusion

This proposal offers a **clear, supportive, and achievable** model for enabling experienced consultants in psychiatry to step into academic and research roles. With partnership from the **RCPsych Academic Faculty**, and modest local structural support, it provides an inclusive, scalable approach that enriches individuals, strengthens services, and contributes to the long-term health of psychiatry as an academic discipline.

---