

## Feedback on applications to the GACD Implementation Science School

September 2025

In 2025, the GACD Implementation Science School received a record number of high-calibre applicants, making the selection process incredibly competitive. If we were unable to offer you a place, please find below some further insight into our decision-making process to help you strengthen any future applications. We hope this provides some reassurance about the rigour of our selection process and the care put into reviewing every application.

### The selection process

Our selection process was designed to be as fair and thorough as possible. Each application underwent a comprehensive review by a panel of three independent reviewers. This multiple-reviewer approach ensured that every applicant was assessed on their individual merit from different perspectives, and it helped us to identify the most suitable candidates for our programme.

Following this initial review, a subcommittee re-assessed all scores and comments. This final stage allowed us to check for consistency and make sure that our final decisions were based on a robust and holistic evaluation. This process helps us to ensure that the chosen cohort is diverse and well-suited to the demands of the School.

### Core selection criteria

Your application was evaluated on:

Commitment and motivation	Potential to benefit	Robust team and institutional support
<p>We looked for applicants who demonstrated a clear, genuine passion for implementation science. This was assessed through personal statements, career trajectory statements, and CVs (resumés).</p> <p>The most successful candidates told a compelling story about their journey, highlighting their desire to deepen and/or broaden their knowledge and detailing how they planned to share what they learned with their colleagues and networks.</p>	<p>We sought to understand how the School would specifically help you achieve your goals. High-scoring applicants provided two distinct and clear learning objectives that were directly linked to our course content. These objectives were specific to their individual needs and role, rather than being generic or overly advanced for the scope of the programme.</p> <p>Further, we prioritised candidates who are new(er) to implementation science, have not yet had exposure to formal training, or do not have access to alternative programmes.</p>	<p>We required clear evidence of support from your organisation. This was assessed through your confirmation of time commitment and a letter of support. The strongest applications included a letter from a direct line manager or team leader that went beyond a generic endorsement. These letters clearly articulated how the candidate would benefit from the School and how their participation would have a tangible, positive impact on their wider team or institution.</p>

## Supplementary selection criteria

In addition to the core criteria, we also considered several supplementary factors to ensure a diverse and impactful cohort, that aligned with GACD’s overall remit.

<p><b>Location</b></p> <p>We prioritised applicants from and currently working in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). This was followed by a preference for applicants from LMICs but working in high-income countries (HICs).</p> <p>Applicants from and working in HICs were also considered but were subject to more competitive ranking, particularly if their work focused on general populations in HICs.</p>	<p><b>Institutional representation</b></p> <p>To foster a broad range of perspectives, we typically selected no more than one or two applicants from the same institution.</p>
<p><b>Use of AI tools</b></p> <p>Our selection committee valued a clear, authentic personal voice. While we acknowledge the increasing use of AI tools, we found that applications with a genuine, personal perspective stood out.</p> <p>The highest-scoring applications demonstrated independent thought and a personal engagement with the subject matter.</p>	<p><b>Non-communicable disease (NCD) focus</b></p> <p>We gave positive selection weighting to applicants whose proposed work focused on the implementation of NCD- and chronic condition-related interventions. This focus aligns with GACD’s commitment to addressing some of the most pressing and complex public health challenges, where implementation science has a critical role to play in bridging the gap between evidence and practice.</p>

## Characteristics of high-scoring applications

The most successful applications had several key characteristics that set them apart:

<p><b>A cohesive narrative</b></p> <p>High-scoring applicants created a clear, consistent story across all application materials. Their personal statements, CVs, and letters of support all worked together to demonstrate an authentic dedication to implementation science.</p>	<p><b>Demonstrable commitment</b></p> <p>Applicants did not just state their motivation; they provided evidence of it through their past experiences and future career plans. They showed how their professional journey was directly related to implementation science and how attending the School would be the next logical step in their development.</p>
<p><b>Specific and aligned learning objectives</b></p> <p>Successful applicants clearly defined their personal learning objectives. These were specific and directly linked to the School’s curriculum, showing how the knowledge gained would be used to address a real-world problem in their current role or future work.</p>	<p><b>Personalised letters of support</b></p> <p>The letters of support for top-tier candidates were highly personalised and came from a direct manager or team leader. These letters went beyond a generic endorsement, clearly articulating how the applicant would benefit from the programme and how their participation would positively impact the wider team or institution.</p>

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### Advice for future applications

- ✓ **Build a cohesive story:** Ensure all parts of your application – your personal statement, CV, and the letter of support – tell a consistent and compelling story. Show the selection committee that your past experiences, current role, and future goals are all connected and lead to your desire to attend the School.
- ✓ **Demonstrate an authentic passion:** Do not just state your interest in implementation science; provide evidence of it. Mention specific projects, experiences, or challenges that have driven your motivation. This will help you stand out from generic applications.
- ✓ **Create specific learning objectives:** Clearly outline two distinct learning objectives that are directly relevant to the School’s content. Make sure these are specific to your unique situation and professional needs, rather than being broad or overly ambitious.
- ✓ **Secure a high-quality letter of support:** Request a letter from your direct team leader or line manager. The letter should be personalised, clearly explaining why you specifically would benefit from attending and how your participation will have a positive impact on your team or institution.
- ✓ **Use AI tools wisely:** While generative AI can be helpful, avoid relying on it to write your application. The selection committee looks for a strong, authentic personal voice. Use these tools only for editing or proofreading to ensure your own unique perspective shines through.