

Cephalalgia

An International Journal of Headache

CEPHALALGIA AND CEPHALALGIA REPORTS REVIEWER ACADEMY - 2026/2027

About the Programme

The Cephalalgia Reviewer Academy is a structured, mentored training programme designed to develop the next generation of expert peer reviewers in headache research. Hosted by the editorial teams of *Cephalalgia* and *Cephalalgia Reports*, the Academy combines formal instruction with supervised practice, offering early-career researchers and clinicians a rigorous pathway to recognised expertise in scientific peer review.

1. PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

The Reviewer Academy pursues three interconnected goals:

- **Train and certify emerging researchers.** Provide early-career scientists and clinicians with structured, mentored training in the principles and practices of scientific peer review, culminating in formal certification.
- **Cultivate a trusted reviewer community.** Build a community of reliable, skilled, and ethically grounded peer reviewers.
- **Strengthen the headache research ecosystem.** Reinforce the quality and integrity of the scientific literature published in *Cephalalgia* and *Cephalalgia Reports* by expanding the pool of competent, committed reviewers.

2. WHO SHOULD APPLY

The Academy welcomes applications from researchers and healthcare professionals who meet the following profile:

Eligibility Criteria

- **Field of interest:** Applicants must have a demonstrated interest in headache disorders, either through research activity or clinical practice.
- **Peer review experience:** The programme is designed for individuals with no prior peer review experience or only basic familiarity with the process. Those with extensive reviewing experience are not the target audience.
- **Commitment:** Applicants must be genuinely committed to developing their reviewing skills and to contributing to headache research and publishing over the long term.

Cephalalgia

An International Journal of Headache

- **Age:** There are no age restrictions. The programme is open to all career stages, though it is particularly suited to early-career investigators and clinicians.
- **IHS membership:** Accepted Trainee Fellows are required to hold membership of the International Headache Society (IHS). Applicants who are not yet members are encouraged to apply; membership must be in place prior to the programme start. Further information is available at the [IHS membership page](#).

Six Trainee Fellow positions are available in the 2026/2027 cohort. The selection process is competitive.

3. PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The Academy runs for one academic year (August 2026 – April 2027) and is organised into two sequential phases.

Phase 1 — Foundational Training (August 2026)

Trainee Fellows begin with a structured web-based course on the principles and practices of scientific peer review, delivered by the Editor-in-Chief. Topics covered include:

- The role and ethics of peer review in scientific publishing.
- Evaluating study design, methodology, and statistical rigour.
- Assessing clinical relevance and contextualising findings within the headache literature.
- Writing a constructive, professional, and actionable reviewer report.
- Managing conflicts of interest and editorial confidentiality.

The course is scheduled for late July or early August 2026, with the exact date confirmed following enrolment.

Phase 2 — Supervised Review Practice (August 2026 – April 2027)

Following the training course, each Trainee Fellow undertakes a minimum of five supervised manuscript reviews. The structure is as follows:

- **Mentor assignment:** Each Trainee Fellow is paired with an individual Mentor drawn from the Editor-in-Chief and Associate Editors.
- **Review submission:** Trainee Fellows submit their reviewer reports via ScholarOne within 14 days of assignment, in accordance with standard editorial deadlines.
- **Mentor oversight:** Each report is reviewed by the assigned Mentor and the Editor-in-Chief before the editorial decision is issued. The Trainee Fellow's comments (edited if needed) are included in the author decision letter alongside those of other reviewers.
- **Single-anonymised process:** The journals operate a single-anonymised review system. Reviewer identities, including those of Trainee Fellows, are not disclosed to authors.

Cephalalgia

An International Journal of Headache

- **Ongoing feedback:** Mentors provide individualised feedback throughout the programme. A dedicated feedback session, conducted by conference call or email, is held to consolidate learning. A final written assessment is issued by 30 April 2027.

4. ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION

Trainee Fellows are assessed throughout the programme using a standardised evaluation framework applied by their Mentor.

Core Competency Assessment

Each fellow is scored against four core competencies:

Performance Category	Mentor Rating Score (1–5)	Comment
Constructive Critique <i>Professional tone; feedback is specific, balanced, and actionable for authors</i>		
Literature & Field Context <i>Accurate knowledge of headache neurology and relevant research literature</i>		
Timeliness & Editorial Workflow <i>Consistent adherence to submission deadlines and editorial procedures</i>		
Research Integrity & Ethics <i>Ability to identify conflicts of interest, data irregularities, or ethical concerns</i>		

The following rating system is applied for each domain:

Sc.	Level	Descriptor
5	Exceptional	Functions at an independent expert level. Provides sophisticated, high-level methodological critique comparable to that of a seasoned reviewer.
4	Proficient	Demonstrates nuanced understanding of the field. Reliably identifies subtle statistical and clinical weaknesses not immediately apparent.
3	Competent	Shows a solid grasp of peer review fundamentals. Accurately identifies the major strengths and limitations of a manuscript.

Cephalalgia

An International Journal of Headache

2	Developing	Displays emerging skills but requires substantial revision and guidance from the Mentor before the report can be transmitted.
1	Needs Growth	Exhibits basic oversights in scientific reasoning, professional tone, or interpretation of statistical evidence.

Certification

- **Certificate of Completion:** Awarded to Trainee Fellows who complete a minimum of five reviews, with at least five reports rated at “Competent” (score ≥ 3) or above.
- **Certificate with Distinction:** Awarded to Trainee Fellows whose performance across at least five reviews is rated “Exceptional”. This distinction is noted on the certificate and communicated to the Editorial Board.

Certificates are issued upon formal closure of the programme on 30 April 2027.

5. BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

Participation in the Reviewer Academy offers tangible professional development advantages:

- **Formal certification.** A certificate of training completion, suitable for inclusion in your CV and recognised within the IHS scientific community.
- **Mentorship from leading experts.** Direct, individualised guidance from the Editor-in-Chief, Associate Editors, and senior reviewers of two internationally recognised headache journals.
- **Profile and recognition.** Trainees are publicly acknowledged on the websites of both *Cephalalgia* and *Cephalalgia Reports*. Outstanding graduates are recognised at the International Headache Conference.
- **Priority pathway to Editorial Board membership.** Graduates who subsequently demonstrate independent reviewing competence will receive priority consideration for appointment to the Editorial Boards of *Cephalalgia* and *Cephalalgia Reports*.
- **No cost.** Participation is entirely free of charge.

6. HOW TO APPLY

Application Materials

Applications must include the following two documents, submitted as a single email:

- **Motivation letter (maximum 500 words).** Your letter should describe: (i) your background and current role; (ii) your specific interest in headache research or clinical practice; (iii) your prior exposure to peer review, if any; and (iv) what you hope to achieve through participation in the Academy.

Cephalalgia

An International Journal of Headache

- **Curriculum vitae.** A current CV highlighting research output, clinical activity, and any prior involvement in scientific publishing or reviewing.

Selection Process

Applications are reviewed by the Editor-in-Chief, who selects six Trainee Fellows from the full applicant pool. Selection is based on an holistic assessment of the following criteria:

- Quality, specificity, and sincerity of the motivation letter.
- Alignment of the applicant's background and expertise with the objectives of the programme.
- Demonstrated commitment to developing peer review skills and contributing to the headache field.
- Potential to contribute constructively to the collaborative and collegial environment of the Academy.

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by the end of June 2026.

Submission

Submit your motivation letter and CV by email to the Editorial Office:

Cephalalgia Editorial Office

editorial.cephalalgia@gmail.com

Deadline for submission 14th June 2026

7. PROGRAMME TIMELINE

Period	Milestone	Details
May 2026	Call for Applications	Programme announced; applications open.
14 June 2026	Application Deadline	All materials must be received by this date.
July 2026	Selection & Notification	Editor-in-Chief reviews applications; all applicants notified.
Late July / Early August 2026	Foundational Course	Web-based training course conducted by the Editor-in-Chief.
August 2026 – April 2027	Supervised Review Practice	Minimum five manuscript reviews under mentor supervision.
30 April 2027	Programme Close	Final mentor assessments issued; certificates awarded.

Cephalalgia

An International Journal of Headache

A Note from the Editorial Office

Peer review is the cornerstone of scientific integrity. The Cephalalgia Reviewer Academy represents our commitment to investing in the people who sustain it. We look forward to welcoming a new cohort of talented researchers and clinicians into this community and to supporting their development as the expert reviewers of tomorrow. We encourage all eligible candidates to apply.