Responses to these FAQs are based on general information about the CPEP-approved fellowship programs. Additional eligibility criteria may be required for some programs. Please see individual program descriptions for specific details.

**What is a CPEP fellowship?**

CPEP fellowships are two-year programs accredited by the American Society for Microbiology’s Committee for Postgraduate Educational Programs (CPEP). The programs are typically administered by clinical microbiology and immunology laboratories and primarily serve to train postdoctoral fellows as directors of medical and public health microbiology and immunology laboratories.

**Who can apply for a CPEP fellowship?**

CPEP-approved programs are open to postdoctoral-level candidates (e.g., Ph.D., M.D., Sc.D., D.O., and Dr. P.H.) with graduate education in microbiology, immunology, or related fields with a significant microbiology- or immunology-related focus. At this time, candidates with a DCLS degree are not eligible to apply for CPEP fellowships. Desirable prerequisites for the postgraduate training programs may include some of the following - courses in epidemiology, immunology, microbiology, molecular biology, histology, pathogenesis of infection, and statistics. Previous work experience in medical and/or public health diagnostic laboratories may be considered when evaluating candidates for the program but is not considered a requirement to apply for CPEP fellowships. A track record of academic achievement (including publications) is generally considered essential.

Each program has individualized eligibility and acceptance criteria. For example, programs may limit applicant acceptance based on visa type, foreign degree, or number of postdoctoral years accumulated. Carefully review each program’s requirements before applying and check with individual programs for specific details.

**When to apply?**

Application cycles are not standardized among the programs. Please note that not all programs accept a new fellow each year. Please see the “Dates & Deadlines” tab for details on each program's timeline.

**What are the career options for CPEP fellows?**

The goal of the CPEP-approved Fellowship Programs is to prepare graduates for positions as laboratory directors or other leadership roles in the field of medical and public health microbiology and medical laboratory immunology. Following successful completion of the training program, many CPEP graduates find employment in clinical microbiology or immunology laboratories at academic medical centers and hospital-based systems. CPEP graduates also fill roles in public health laboratories at the state and national levels, large commercial reference laboratories, government bodies such as the CDC and FDA, university research programs, college or university educational settings or in industry-based diagnostic companies with involvement in scientific or research and development related roles with the production of diagnostic testing reagents and equipment. The most common employers of program graduates
include hospitals and hospital systems, reference laboratories, public health laboratories or diagnostic companies.

**What does a laboratory director do each day?**

CPEP graduates are active in the discovery, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of infectious and immune mediated diseases, combating the emergence of antimicrobial resistance, responding and responding to bioterrorism events, and leading or assisting epidemiologic investigations of outbreaks.

There are two primary skill sets required to be a successful laboratory director, and the CPEP program is designed to develop both. The first set is subject matter expertise and high-level analytical thinking. The second set is leadership and management “business” skills that are essential to allow a laboratory director to be effective. Although the settings may vary, many directors have responsibilities such as:

- Participate in patient care by serving as consultants to physicians/medical staff in specimen collection, test selection and interpretation, as well as test utilization/algorithms
- Operational oversight of the diagnostic testing, including evaluation of new testing options, cost/benefit evaluation, annual planning/budgeting, oversight of test validation and optimization
- Ensure compliance with regulatory and accreditation requirements, quality assurance, and safety. Administrative oversight of project management; multiple-level communication and service as clinical microbiology/immunology expert to various organizational entities
- Serve as liaison with public health laboratories and the CDC.
- Facilitate interactions and collaborations with industry partners for the development diagnostic testing.
- Hospital-based directors are often involved in committees such as infection prevention and antimicrobial stewardship, as well as working with interdisciplinary teams to coordinate laboratory resources and responses in the setting of novel pathogen outbreaks and bioterror threats.
- Academic-based directors train pathology residents, infectious diseases fellows, allergy/immunology fellows, microbiology fellows, as well as serve as medical educators in teaching hospitals for laboratory staff and providers, and medical students, if the hospital is affiliated with a medical school.
- Academic endeavors may include new diagnostic assay evaluations, investigation of novel pathogens, test development, quality assurance projects, case reports, and collaborating with clinicians and scientists on research projects and publications.

**How can I prepare to be a candidate for a CPEP fellowship?**
It is helpful to talk to those working in the field about the job to gain a general understanding of the function and dynamics of a clinical laboratory. It is common for larger hospitals and academic medical centers to have clinical lab directors on-site and the opportunity to shadow a director can be a valuable experience. If you wish to contact a board certified medical microbiologist or immunologist in your area to discuss professional opportunities, please send an email message to certification@asmusa.org. Please include your contact information. A program graduate will contact you. This contact may be a helpful step toward understanding and selecting a postgraduate career path.

In addition, becoming familiar with literature that is germane to the field (e.g., *Clinical Microbiology Reviews, MMWR, Manual of Molecular and Clinical Laboratory Immunology* or the *Journal of Clinical Microbiology*) is a good way to familiarize yourself with current topics. Prospective fellows may choose to connect with local clinical microbiology/immunology laboratories to inquire about opportunities to participate in activities such as case/plate rounds or infectious disease case conferences to further develop their understanding of the field. Candidates are responsible for obtaining required permissions and fulfilling appropriate institutional requirements for participation in such activities.

If you’re not a member of ASM, you should consider joining. If you are a member, it may be helpful to attend a local or national meeting if you have the opportunity.

**What happens during a CPEP fellowship?**

Training in the CPEP-approved Fellowship Programs affords the participating fellow with an in-depth knowledge of clinical aspects of infectious diseases/immunology, specifically as they apply to laboratory diagnosis. Training includes practical bench exercises, clinical experiences, and self-instructional materials.

Fellows in clinical microbiology learn diagnostic bacteriology, mycology, parasitology and virology, antimicrobial susceptibility testing methods, and techniques used in the molecular diagnosis of infectious diseases. [Specifics about the clinical microbiology training are available in the training Essentials.](#)

Fellows in medical immunology gain broad yet detailed knowledge in allergy, immunology, transplantation, cancer, infectious and autoimmune disease. Bench level technical, didactic, clinical and managerial training are provided. [Specifics about the medical immunology training are available in the training Essentials.](#)

All fellows receive research training and conduct original or collaborative research in conjunction with their clinical training. In addition, fellows study laboratory management, epidemiology, public health and laboratory safety.

The first year is primarily focused on bench-level training, handling clinical consults and developing the clinical microbiology and immunology knowledge base of the fellow. In the second year, the fellow is expected to function more independently in handling laboratory and clinical consults, and participate in research projects, as well as rotations with Infectious Diseases and other services.
Is there a test or board certification for CPEP fellows?

Yes, there is board certification for CPEP fellows in medical and public health microbiology. It is offered by the American Board of Medical Microbiology (ABMM) and it certifies doctoral-level microbiologists to direct medical and public health microbiology laboratories. ABMM certification is recognized by federal and state governmental agencies as a significant component toward meeting licensure requirements to direct laboratories engaged in the microbiological diagnosis of human disease. Board certification is required for most medical laboratory positions and provides peer recognition. **Completion of a CPEP accredited postdoctoral fellowship confers eligibility for the ABMM examination.**