



Criselda Van der Speeten

- **Current Role:** Aspiring Clinical Research Professional (Job Seeking)
- **STAR Programme:** Junior CRA
- **Programme Year:** 2024

How Criselda Launched Her Clinical Research Career with ECCRT's STAR Programme



Before the STAR Programme

I've always been passionate about science and its potential to improve lives. I hold a Bachelor's degree in Medical Technology and a Master's degree in Environmental Sanitation. My career began as a Medical Technologist in a central laboratory, where I analysed samples from clinical investigation sites. That role gave me my first real insight into the clinical side of healthcare.

Later, I moved to Research Scientist role in the agricultural and biotech industry. My work spanned multiple areas, including early-stage drug discovery, where I developed and executed assays for compound screening, identified candidate molecules, and supported lead optimisation. I was also involved in other research projects that deepened my scientific expertise and problem-solving skills.

While I enjoyed my work, I found myself wanting to be closer to the part of research that directly impacts patients, the world of clinical trials.



Why ECCRT?

When I discovered ECCRT's STAR Programme, I immediately saw it as the bridge I needed to make the leap into clinical research. The Junior Clinical Research track promised to give me the regulatory knowledge, operational insight, and practical tools that my academic and laboratory background alone couldn't provide. I also liked that the programme combined learning with mentorship and career guidance, which felt perfect for someone making a transition.



Experience During the Programme

The learning journey included face-to-face and online courses, as well as the internships, which were the highlight for me. Getting exposure to clinical investigation site, sponsor operations, and CRO activities gave me a 360-degree view of how clinical trials are conducted.

I gained valuable insights, among others, in Good Clinical Practice (ICH-GCP), ISO 14155, and the EU MDR 2017/745, as well as the full lifecycle of a clinical investigation, from planning and ethics submissions to monitoring, safety reporting, and archiving.



Where Are You Now?

Since completing the STAR Programme, I have been actively applying for roles in clinical research. I feel far more confident approaching employers, because I can show both solid training and practical experience across three different types of organisations in the industry.



Final Word of Advice

If you want to start a career in clinical research, the ECCRT Junior Clinical Researcher STAR Programme is an excellent choice. It combines theories with a year-long internship, providing both knowledge and real-world experience. Especially if you have a scientific or healthcare background, the STAR Programme offers the structure, support, and confidence you need to successfully transition and shows how valuable your prior experience really is.

