



Solar and planetary studies 2021

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC)
Funding type:	Grant
Publication date:	14 December 2020
Opening date:	2 December 2020
Closing date:	4 March 2021 16:00 UK time

Last updated: 19 February 2021

[Start application](#)

You can apply for either a consolidated grant or a consortium grant to support your institution's research programme covering all aspects of solar system science.

This funding covers three years of research activity starting from April 2022.

If you are joining a department that holds a current consolidated or consortium grant, you may be eligible for funding through the new applicant scheme.

This funding opportunity is part of the STFC astronomy research grants assessed by the Astronomy Grants Panel.

For astronomy and astrophysics beyond the solar system, see the related [Astronomy observation and theory](#) opportunity.

[Open all](#)

Who can apply

For consolidated or consortium grants

You can apply if your group applied to the 2018 round and it's now time to refresh the support for your research activities.

Groups usually apply for a consolidated grant or consortium grant every three years. Funding from this year's round will support projects starting from 1 April 2022.

New groups: check your eligibility

If your group has not been funded by this grant before, you need to contact the STFC astronomy awards team before starting your application. The team will check your eligibility and advise which grant is appropriate.

Find out more about types of grant in the full [astronomy research grant application guidelines 2021 \(PDF, 498KB\)](#).

[See general STFC eligibility requirements.](#)

Who is not eligible

Any group that:

- has been awarded a consortium or consolidated grant within the last three years
- has applied within the last three years, but did not secure funding
- is proposing a research programme outside the remit of solar system science.

For the new applicant scheme

You can apply for this scheme if you:

- are a newly appointed academic member of staff who has joined a department between consolidated or consortium grant submissions
- are [eligible for STFC research funding](#)
- can show there are insufficient funds within the existing consolidated or consortium grant to support your research
- do not hold a fellowship.

You will need to submit a pre-proposal before applying. See 'How to apply' for more details.

What we're looking for

We are looking to fund projects that cover theory, including modelling, simulation and related software development, observation, experiment and new technology research, relevant to all aspects of solar system science.

Key themes

Proposals could include projects relating to:

- solar physics and heliospheric physics
- space-based terrestrial magnetospheric science and fundamental space plasma physics (excluding the impact on the Earth's neutral atmosphere)
- planetary science, including the surfaces and interiors, atmospheres, ionospheres and magnetospheres of the solar system bodies other than the Earth
- studies of other solar system bodies including comets, asteroids and meteorites
- laboratory studies of solar system material such as meteorites, returned samples, solar system analogues, other laboratory physics relevant to the area of the call and related software development
- blue skies technology/instrumentation development applicable to the above areas.

Find out more about the scope of this opportunity in the full [astronomy research grant application guidelines 2021 \(PDF, 498KB\)](#).

Mars exploration and sample return

For research related to this area you should first check if the UK Space Agency [Aurora science programme](#) is more suitable than this opportunity. Your research would then be out of this opportunity's remit.

Support for technology development projects

We support proposals at Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 1 to 4 or equivalent.

For funding opportunities that support higher TRL proposals, see the [UK Space Agency](#). For definitions of Technology Readiness Levels see the [STFC Project Research and Development scheme](#).

What you can request to fund

You can request support for investigators, researchers, technicians and associated students involved in the research programme.

You should be realistic about the number of posts this funding can support. We advise you to mostly request support for existing posts and only request a small number of additional posts.

Equipment

You can request funding to pay for equipment, or that contributes to its total cost. Equipment can be shared across a number of projects or be for a specific task.

In general, STFC will contribute around 50% of the cost of equipment items, although this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

STFC will contribute 100% of the cost only if the support is for instrument development and you have permission from the office to apply for this level of funding.

For more guidance on requesting resources see the full [astronomy research grant application guidelines 2021 \(PDF, 498KB\)](#).

See also the [STFC research grants handbook](#).

New applicant scheme

There are additional terms for this scheme:

- You cannot be funded on more than one grant. For example, if you hold STFC-supported resources at your previous university, you should negotiate the relocation of those resources.
- You cannot hold resources on both this new applicant scheme and either a consolidated or consortium grant at your previous university.
- You must be the sole investigator.
- You can only apply once at any institution for the new applicant scheme.
- You can apply for funding for a minimum of a year and a maximum of three years (or until the issue of the department's next consolidated or consortium grant).
- You can apply for limited resources to allow you to begin to establish a research programme.

Out of scope

For **astronomy and astrophysics research beyond the solar system** you should apply under the separate [Astronomy observation and theory opportunity](#).

If your research activities have significant overlap between solar system science and extra-solar science, in rare cases you may be able to request resources under both funding opportunities. The panel will examine these cases closely.

How to apply

Applying for a consolidated or consortium grant

You must apply by using the Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S).

When applying select:

- council: STFC
- document type: Standard Proposal
- scheme: Standard
- call: Solar and Planetary Studies 2021.

For information on how to complete your proposal, read the [full astronomy research grant guidance \(PDF, 498KB\)](#).

Your proposal should include:

- case for support
- summary of existing support
- requested resources summary table (see template in Additional information)
- facilities table
- publication statistics table
- Gantt chart (N/A for new applicant scheme)
- data management plan
- equipment quotes (if relevant)
- any additional information such as letters of support.

Attach all documents as PDFs. Read the [full STFC document formatting requirements](#).

Note: If you're applying for a consortium grant, all the institutions involved need to submit the same Case for Support to Je-S and then link their proposals.

Applying for new applicant scheme

You will need to get permission from the research office before submitting your full proposal.

Submitting your pre-proposal

Please send a **one page pre-proposal** and a **brief letter from your Head of Department** to kim.burchell@stfc.ukri.org and chloe.woodcock@stfc.ukri.org at least two weeks before the full application deadline.

Your pre-proposal should include:

- why support from the new applicant scheme is needed and how you meet the eligibility criteria
- description of your current support from your new institution (for example, a starter package)
- brief description of the nature and strength of the scientific case you will describe in the full proposal
- indication of the requested resources and duration.

The letter from your head of department should include:

- confirmation of your employment status and timing
- (if the department holds an existing consolidated or consortium grant) an explanation of why your research cannot be supported using the spending flexibility allowed within the existing grant.

If the panel agrees that your funding is a high priority, you will be asked to submit a full proposal by the closing date.

Preparing your full new applicant proposal

Your full proposal should follow the guidance provided for the consolidated and consortium grants, with the following differences:

- you have one page to describe the programme in the group, or department, setting
 - you do not need a Gantt chart.
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How we will assess your application

Your proposal is assessed according to the [STFC Assessment Criteria categories](#).

Proposals are assessed in September 2021 by the relevant sub-panels of the [Astronomy Grants Panel](#) (AGP):

- AGP: SS – solar studies
- AGP: PL – planetary studies.

If needed, the panel may move projects between sub-panels (for example, move an SS project to the PL panel).

Each project in a proposal is assessed and ranked independently. The panel will not split projects to rank smaller work packages individually. For example, if you propose a project with more than one postdoctoral research associate, the panel will either recommend funding the whole request or not recommend funding the project.

Responding to reviewer comments and panel questions

You can see reviewer comments using Je-S.

The STFC research office will send you questions from the panel by email. This is an opportunity to update the panel with any relevant information.

You have 10 working days to respond to comments and questions by uploading your responses to Je-S. Responses are limited in the system and any responses that exceed the limit will be rejected.

Finding out your outcome

You will be informed of your outcome and receive feedback in November 2021.

Contact details

For more information on this funding opportunity please contact:

- Chloe Woodcock, Senior Programme Manager: chloe.woodcock@stfc.ukri.org
 - Kim Burchell, Head of Astronomy Awards: kim.burchell@stfc.ukri.org
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Additional info

This funding opportunity is part of the astronomy research grants run each year by STFC.

Aims

The specific aims of these grants are to:

- ensure that the programme supported is scientifically excellent and is clearly in line with stated council strategic science objectives
- consider the strategic objectives of the UK Space Agency, address the impact agenda and be responsive to changes and new ideas
- ensure that the process is transparent and accountable, particularly with respect to the means of prioritisation
- ensure that the outcome, where appropriate, takes account of the council's and the UK Space Agency's current and planned investment in facilities
- ensure that there is an appropriate balance between observations, instrumentation and theory and between the various sub-disciplines of astronomy and the development of novel, generic technologies for astronomy and space science, consistent with the overall strategy of council and the UK Space Agency.

The Astronomy Grants Panel remit and makeup

The Astronomy Grants Panel (AGP) is comprised of experts covering the following four broad science areas within astronomy:

- AGP: AO – astronomy observations
- AGP: AT – astronomy theory
- AGP: SS – solar studies and space-based solar terrestrial physics
- AGP: PL – planetary studies.

[Details of panel members.](#)

Supporting documents

- [Astronomy research grant application guidelines 2021 \(PDF, 498KB\)](#)
- [Requested resources summary table template \(DOC, 135KB\)](#)
- [STFC project management framework](#)
- [STFC grants handbook](#)
- [Je-S handbook](#)
- [Data management plan](#)
- [Peer review and assessment](#)
- [Equality and Diversity](#)
- [Technology readiness levels definitions – PRD scheme](#)

Previous rounds

- [Community report on the 2020 astronomy grants round \(PDF, 722KB\)](#)

- [Ranked list for funded projects in 2019 astronomy grants round \(PDF, 80KB\)](#)
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Timeline

- **2 December 2020**
Competition opens
- **4 March 2021**
Competition closes
- **April to May 2021**
Review process
- **June 2021**
Respond to reviewer comments and panel questions
- **November 2021**
Outcome announced
- **1 April 2022**
Grant starts

Related content

[Researchfish](#)

Related opportunities

[Astronomy observation and theory 2021](#)

NOTE This is the first phase of our new website – let us know if you have [feedback](#) or would like to [help us test new developments](#).

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