



# MRC neurosciences and mental health new investigator research grants: May 2021

<b>Opportunity status:</b>	Open
<b>Funders:</b>	<a href="#">Medical Research Council (MRC)</a>
<b>Funding type:</b>	Grant
<b>Publication date:</b>	9 February 2021
<b>Opening date:</b>	15 February 2021
<b>Closing date:</b>	26 May 2021 16:00 UK time

*Last updated: 2 March 2021*

[Start application](#)

These Neurosciences and Mental Health Board grants are for researchers who are ready to take the next step towards becoming an independent principal investigator with clear host institution support.

There is no limit to the funding that you can request but the amount should be appropriate to the project. You must also be able to justify why you need this amount to deliver the objectives of your research. Typically awards are up to £1 million. We will usually fund up to 80% of your project's full economic cost.

New investigator research grants usually last three years and fund up to 50% of your salary.

## Who can apply

The new investigator research grant is aimed at researchers who are capable of becoming independent principal investigators and who are now ready to take the next step towards that goal. You do not need a specific number of years postdoctoral experience to be eligible to apply.

You may apply for funding to carry out research at your current UK research organisation or any other eligible UK institution you want to move to.

You must:

- have the support of an eligible UK research organisation
- be able to show that your skills and experience match those in the [applicant skills and experience table](#) (transition to independence), such as showing evidence of career progress and clear plans to develop your own research niche
- provide a clear rationale of why this grant will best support your long-term career goals and chosen career route
- have at least a graduate degree, although most applicants have a PhD or medical degree
- be the sole intellectual leader of the proposed project, although we will allow co-investigators when they bring expertise to the project which is outside the applicant's field.

The focus of this funding opportunity is neurosciences and mental health research. There are similar opportunities across [other areas of medical research within our remit](#), including:

- infections and immunity
- population and systems medicine
- molecular and cellular medicine
- applied global health.

You can also apply for a new investigator grant through the methodology research programme. There are also other types of awards including research, programmes and partnerships.

You should contact us if you are not sure which opportunity to apply to.

You are still eligible to apply if:

- you hold a lecturer appointment, a junior fellowship or another research staff position
- you hold, or have held, an early career training fellowship such as an MRC skills development fellowship
- you do not have a contract with your chosen host institution.

You are not eligible to apply if:

- you have already achieved independence. This is usually if you have received significant income as a principal investigator. Substantial grant income is typically defined as grants or fellowships up to three years long, with more than £50,000 direct science costs (excluding the principal investigator's salary) per annum
- you have already established your own research group
- you have already applied to the scheme twice unsuccessfully
- you have an application for a UKRI fellowship under consideration.

If you have any doubts about your eligibility, you should contact the relevant MRC programme manager to check if you are eligible to apply.

[Find out more about new investigator research grants in our video guide.](#)

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## What we're looking for

The Neurosciences and Mental Health Board funds research in neurosciences, mental health and disorders of the human nervous system. We aim to transform our understanding of the physiology and behaviour of the human nervous system throughout the life course in health and in illness, as well as how to treat and prevent disorders of the brain.

The research we support includes the interactions between the nervous system and other parts of the body: the brain, mental health and physical health. We are also interested in how episodes throughout life impact on lifelong mental and neurological health.

Research we fund includes, but is not limited to, the following areas:

- neurodegeneration
- clinical neurology and neuroinflammation
- mental health
- addictions and substance misuse
- behavioural and learning disorders including autism
- cognitive and behavioural neuroscience and cognitive systems
- sensory neuroscience including vision and hearing
- neurobiology and neurophysiology
- underpinning support, such as neuroimaging technology, brain banking and neuroinformatics.

[Find out more about the science areas we support and our current board opportunity areas.](#)

We encourage you to contact us first to discuss your application, especially if you believe your research may cross MRC research board or research council interests. If your application fits another research board remit better then we may decide to transfer it there to be assessed.

We expect you will want to combine your research project with other activities. For example, time spent on other research grants or clinical duties, teaching or administration duties, or other time spent in faculty.

You may spend up to 50% of your contracted working time on this project and we will cap our contribution to your salary at this level. If you want to spend more time than this on your project, you must provide a strong scientific rationale and your host institution will need to underwrite the extra time. The salary requested should be in line with the research organisation's usual new investigator levels.

New investigator research grants usually last three years and are not renewable. It may be possible to apply for a longer period but you will need to justify why this is necessary. Projects help applicants in the transition to independence so will not usually be for shorter periods.

Co-investigators can be involved but must bring expertise to the project which is outside the applicant's field. Your current supervisor or lab head should not be a co-investigator.

You can request funding for costs such as:

- a salary contribution, capped at 50% of your total working time
- the salary for any hours that your co-investigators will spend working on the project
- support for extra research or technical posts
- consumables and equipment
- travel costs
- data preservation, data sharing and dissemination costs
- estates or indirect costs.

There is no set limit to the funding available but your application must be for an amount that:

- is appropriate to the project
- you can justify in delivering the objectives of the proposed research.

Your application must show 100% of the full economic cost. We will fund up to 80% of the full economic cost of your research to your institution. [Find out more about full economic costing](#).

We will not fund:

- research involving trials of clinical treatments
- costs for PhD studentships
- publication costs.

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## How to apply

Application deadlines for Neurosciences and Mental Health Board funding are usually around January, May and September to October, although sometimes dates can change so check the funding finder for details. You can submit to any one of the available deadlines in the year.

### [Search funding opportunities](#)

You may only submit to the new investigator scheme twice. You can submit a second application only if your first is not successful. You must wait at least a year after your first submission before submitting a second application.

## Applying through Je-S

You must apply through the [Joint Electronic Submission system \(Je-S\)](#). Please read the [Je-S how to apply guidance \(PDF, 140KB\)](#) for more information. If you need further help, you can contact the Je-S help desk on 01793 444164 or by email [jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org](mailto:jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org).

You should give your administrative department sufficient notice that you intend to apply. Your organisation must submit your application before 16:00 on the deadline date.

When applying select:

- council: MRC
- document type: standard proposal
- scheme: research grant
- call/type/mode: New investigator research grants (NIRG) only research boards May 2021.

## Guidance for applicants

Our [guidance for applicants](#) will:

- help you check your eligibility
- guide you through preparing an application
- show you how to prepare a case for support
- provide details of any ethical and regulatory requirements that may apply.

Your new investigator research grant application must include a letter of support confirming that you have originated the research question and written the research application.

Research organisations must also attach to all applications a statement of support signed by a senior authority. It should:

- support the application including through long-term financial commitment
- describe why the organisation considers you to be a suitable candidate for a new investigator grant

- lay out plans for how the organisation will mentor, guide and support your career development
- detail how they will financially support non-project time
- confirm that you are a recognised and valued part of their team, integrated into the research organisation, and able to develop your independence and the focus of your research
- detail the internal process the application has gone through before submission
- describe how the research organisation will support you following the end of the award
- provide details of a named senior academic who has supported you during the development of your application and who will continue to do so.

This letter of support should also describe how the host organisation will support you, for instance:

- guidance and training on setting up a research group, building partnerships and collaborations, or with public engagement
- rapid access to resources at the research organisation through knowledge of appropriate processes and systems
- access to career development support and advice to enable future career transitions
- support for any proposed leadership activities
- access to laboratory space or investment in equipment to establish the applicant's laboratory, access to communal departmental resources.

You must apply using the [new investigator research grant CV and salary template \(DOCX, 25KB\)](#)

## Industrial partners

If you want to include one or more industry partners as a project partner, you must also:

- complete the project partner section in Je-S
- submit an MRC industrial collaboration agreement (MICA) form and heads of terms
- include 'MICA' as a prefix to your project title.

Find out more about [MRC industry collaboration agreements](#).

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## How we will assess your application

We will assess your application against [our applicant skills and experience criteria](#) (transition to independence) which focuses on your:

- research vision
- research experience and potential

- personal development
- leadership
- communication and engagement skills
- profile and influence.

We will also take into consideration the support that your host research organisation will provide. We recommend that you review these criteria and discuss them with your research organisation when you are developing your application as this will help you secure an appropriate statement of support.

When we receive your application, it will be peer reviewed by independent experts from the UK and overseas.

You can nominate up to three independent reviewers. We will invite only one to assess your research application and may decide not to approach any of your nominated reviewers.

Peer reviewers will assess your application and provide comments. They will also score it using the peer reviewer scoring system against the following criteria:

- importance – how important are the questions, or gaps in knowledge, that are being addressed?
- scientific potential – what are the prospects for good scientific progress?
- resources requested – are the funds requested essential for the work? And do the importance and scientific potential justify funding on the scale requested? Does the proposal represent good value for money?

[Read the detailed assessment criteria for each grant type.](#)

We will review these scores and comments at a triage meeting and expect to continue with the highest quality applications with potential to be funded. If your application passes the triage stage, we will give you the chance to respond to reviewers comments.

A board meeting will then discuss your application and decide if it is suitable for funding. We will make a decision within six months of receiving your application.

All MRC research boards handle new investigator applications as a cross-board opportunity. This means that they may be prioritised during funding discussions.

[Find out more about our peer review process.](#)

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## Contact details

Visit our [science contacts page](#) or contact the programme manager most relevant to your research area for advice on developing your application and which board to apply to:

- head of programme – mental health: Dr Karen Brakspear – [brakspear@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:brakspear@mrc.ukri.org)
- programme manager for cognition and developmental disorders: Dr Charlotte Inchley – [inchley@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:inchley@mrc.ukri.org)
- programme manager for neuronal function: Dr Simon Fisher – [fisher@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:fisher@mrc.ukri.org)
- programme manager for neurodegeneration: Dr Clara Fons – [fons@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:fons@mrc.ukri.org)
- programme manager for pain and addiction: Dr Siv Vingill – [vingill@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:vingill@mrc.ukri.org)
- programme manager for neurological disorders: Dr Steph Migchelsen – [migchelsen@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:migchelsen@mrc.ukri.org)
- programme manager for adolescent mental health: Dr Victoria Swann – [swann@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:swann@mrc.ukri.org).

Other contacts:

- for queries about submitting your application using Je-S, email [jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org](mailto:jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org) or call 01793 444164
- for general enquiries about your application contact [nmhb@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:nmhb@mrc.ukri.org).

For general queries about MRC policy and eligibility or if you are not sure who to contact, get in touch with our research funding policy and delivery team:

- [rfpd@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:rfpd@mrc.ukri.org)
- 01793 416440.

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## Additional info

You can find more information and guidance in our new investigator research grant [frequently asked questions](#).

From January 2020, all successful new investigator research grant holders are eligible to register for the [Academy of Medical Sciences mentoring scheme](#).

## Supporting documents

[Je-S how to apply guidance \(PDF, 140KB\)](#)

[New investigator research grant CV and salary template \(DOCX, 25KB\)](#)

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## Timeline

- **15 February 2021**  
Opening date
  
- **26 May 2021 16:00**  
Closing date
  
- **29 September 2021**  
Shortlisting date
  
- **10 to 11 November 2021**  
Meeting dates

## Related content

[New investigator research grant - frequently asked questions](#)

[New investigator research grants \(video\)](#)

[Guidance for applicants](#)

[The science areas we fund and support](#)

[Peer review process](#)

[Information about full economic costing](#)

[MRC strategy](#)

[MRC terms and conditions](#)

[MRC industry collaboration agreements](#)

[Neurosciences and Mental Health Board membership](#)

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](#).