MRC population and systems medicine programme grant: May 2021

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	[Medical Research Council (MRC)](#)
Funding type:	Grant
Publication date:	10 February 2021
Opening date:	15 February 2021
Closing date:	19 May 2021 16:00 UK time

Last updated: 4 March 2021

Start application

Programme grants provide large, long-term and renewable programme funding for researchers working in the area of population and systems medicine research.

They aim to help the medical science community to 'think bigger':

We award programme grants to UK-based research organisations. Programme grants are usually based within an academic institution which has the variety of expertise and disciplines to undertake the programme.

Applications are typically for funding of £1 million or more, and we will usually fund up to 80% of your project's full economic cost.

Programmes last up to five years.

Who can apply

Any UK-based researcher with an employment contract at an eligible research organisation can apply for a programme grant. You will need to show that you will direct the proposed research yourself and be actively involved in the work.

You must have:

- a graduate degree, although we expect most applicants to have a PhD or medical degree
- a substantial record of securing research funding and delivering high-quality research.

You can include one or more industry partners as project partners in your application. You can also include international co-investigators if they provide expertise that is not available in the UK.

You are not eligible to apply for a programme grant if you are:

- from an MRC institute
- a core-supported programme or group leader from MRC units and the Francis Crick Institute.

A principal investigator can usually hold only one programme grant at a time.

The focus of this funding opportunity is population and systems medicine research.

There are similar opportunities across **other areas of medical research within our remit** including:

- molecular and cellular medicine
- infections and immunity
- neurosciences and mental health
- applied global health.

There are also other types of awards including research, partnerships and new investigator.

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

What we're looking for

The Population and Systems Medicine Board funds research to unlock the complexity of human health and disease across the life course. Our remit includes population

health and the impact of environmental factors including the social environment on health outcomes.

The research we support includes the physiology and pathophysiology of all the major organs and systems, with the exception of the brain and the immune system which are normally supported through our other research boards.

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

- cardiovascular
- respiratory
- musculoskeletal
- gastroenterology
- renal medicine and liver function
- endocrinology and reproductive health
- maternal health and the early origins of health and disease
- nutrition, metabolic regulation, diabetes and obesity
- trauma, acute medicine and surgery
- inflammation in relation to disease processes and the resolution of the inflammatory response
- medical sociology
- lifestyle, socio-economic and behavioural impacts on health
- health inequalities
- population and disease related cohorts.

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 define a programme as a coordinated and coherent group of related projects. You may develop these projects to address an interrelated set of questions across a broad scientific area.

We do not expect you to find answers to all these questions within the duration of the grant. Parts of the programme may be a continuation of current activity but we expect other elements to be innovative and ambitious.

Programmes are a large investment for MRC so we expect you to show how your application fits within **MRC strategy**.

You can request funding for costs such as:

- a contribution to the salary of the principal investigator and co-investigators
- support for other posts such as research and technical
- research consumables
- equipment

- travel costs
- data preservation, data sharing and dissemination costs
- estates/indirect costs.

We won't fund:

- research involving randomised trials of clinical treatments
- funding to use as a 'bridge' between grants
- costs for PhD studentships
- publication costs.

How to apply

Application deadlines for Population and Systems Medicine Board funding are usually around January, May and September although sometimes launch and application deadlines can change. Check the Funding finder for details.

You can submit to any of the available deadlines in the year. We do not expect you to submit more than two applications at the same time and encourage you to focus on application quality, not the number you can submit. Read our **guidance for applicants** for details of our resubmission process.

Pre-application stage (new programmes)

The standard of applications for programme grants is very competitive.

You must contact the relevant programme manager before you apply to check if your proposal is suitable. You must do this at least six weeks before the deadline.

You should email the programme manager, attaching a brief description of your proposal. The document should be no more than two pages, plus one page of references, and include:

- the title of the potential programme
- a list of the principal investigator and co-investigators and their affiliations
- a list of collaborators (if known at this stage)
- an estimate of the likely cost to MRC.

You should answer the following questions on the suitability of your proposal for a programme grant. You should also address its strategic fit and suitability for a major investment:

- is the proposed work a programme (a coordinated and coherent group of related projects to answer an interrelated set of questions)?
- does the work need long-term and extensive support?
- is the proposed work in an MRC area of high strategic priority?

- is there a case for a major investment in the context of the board portfolio and budget?
- do you have a track record that shows you have the potential to successfully manage and deliver a major research programme?

It is important that you clearly state your aims but we do not expect this initial document to contain detailed research proposals.

You must also attach:

- a CV (no more than two pages of A4)
- a list of publications for the principal investigator and co-investigators (one page of A4 only)
- a summary of the principal investigator's funding history. We will assess your track record of research and potential to manage and deliver a major research programme.

Longitudinal Population Studies

If your application is to fund new or existing longitudinal population studies, you must first submit an outline application for joint review by the Longitudinal Population Studies Strategic Advisory Panel (LPS-SAP) and the Research Board. Should a full application be invited, this may be submitted within a 12-month window.

Applications for longitudinal population studies must be for core infrastructure only; applications may include associated research only if it is for proof of principle work. Applicants must speak to the relevant Programme Manager at least six weeks before the outline submission deadline to confirm the eligibility of their application. Please email **populationcohorts@mrc.ukri.org** for the outline template, timeline for review and next outline submission deadline. Applications for funding for clinical (i.e. patient specific or disease-focused) cohorts are exempt from this process.

Full application stage (new programmes and renewals)

We may invite you to complete a full application via our online **Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S)**. We will do this in advance of the relevant closing date.

If you are submitting a new application, you should include a cover letter confirming the name of the programme manager who agreed you could apply. If you are applying to renew your grant, the cover letter should include details of the original grant.

You should read **section two of the MRC guidance for applicants** for information on how to complete the application.

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**.

Case for support

The list below covers specific points that you should address when writing your case for support. It also provides details of what reviewers and research board members are looking for.

You should read the list in conjunction with the general guidance in **section 2.2.3 of the MRC guidance for applicants**.

You must provide the following in your case for support:

Importance

- State the aims of the programme
- Justify why you cannot fund the programme in other ways
- Explain why it is appropriate to establish a programme in this scientific area
- Explain how establishing a programme will help increase your productivity and create added value
- Show the significance of the programme for this area(s) of research
- Explain how the programme will improve the UK's international standing in this area.

Scientific potential

- Participants in the programme and existing funding
- You must provide a brief report on the progress of your recent research, including any preliminary data relevant to the programme
- What is the scale of support provided? This does not have to be detailed, for instance, the number of post-doctorates and/or technicians supported together with the total amount of consumables and equipment provided over the course of the grant).

Environment

- Describe the environment(s) in which the programme will take place
- If the proposal is for shared equipment or expertise, describe where this will be and how the host organisation will support it). Also describe the management arrangements for ensuring equity of access
- Describe the host research organisation's support for the programme.

Research plans

- Give details of the general experimental approaches, study designs and techniques that you will use. You do not need to describe each experiment but give enough detail to show why the research is likely to be competitive in its field. For example:

- highlight plans which are particularly original or unique
- describe all foreseeable human studies and animal experiments (in as much detail as possible at this stage)
- explain in greater detail how you will approach new techniques, or particularly difficult or risky studies, and alternative approaches if these fail
- identify facilities or resources you will need to access.

- Give sufficient detail to justify the resources requested.

Ethics and research governance

- You must follow the guidance in **section 2.2.3.3 of the MRC guidance for applicants (case for support content)**

Exploitation and dissemination

- You must follow the guidance in **section 2.2.3.3 of the MRC guidance for applicants (case for support content)**

Management

- Provide a simple explanation of how you will manage the programme

Programme grant renewals: extra requirements

You must provide a progress report with an application for renewal. You should attach this as a PDF file to your Je-S application as a 'final/interim report' attachment type.

You must use the following set of headings:

- title
- summary (not exceeding 250 words)
- progress (no more than five pages):
  - describe progress made against original aims and objectives since the grant was awarded or since the last report
  - any unpublished data must be included in the case for support.

You should include with the progress report:

- a list of publications arising from this work, including web links to online papers
- a list of staff employed on the grant up to the current date.

Applying through Je-S

You must apply through the Je-S system.

Please read the **Je-S how to apply guidance (PDF, 190KB)** 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**.

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: research boards May 2021 submissions

Indicating the proposal is a programme grant

Select the 'grant type' option from the proposal document menu, within the Je-S proposal form. Within the section, select the radio button adjacent to the 'programme grant' option and select the 'save' button.

How we will assess your application

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 proposal 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 requested funds 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 proposal and decide if it is suitable for funding. We make a decision within six months of receiving your application

Find out more about our **peer review process**.

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:

- programme manager for systems medicine: Dr Tamsyn Derrick – **tamsyn.derrick@mrc.ukri.org**
- programme manager for experimental medicine and clinical sciences: Dr Richard Evans – **richard.evans@mrc.ukri.org**
- programme manager for nutrition and gastroenterology: Dr Karen Finney – **karen.finney@mrc.ukri.org**
- programme manager for life course and ageing: Dr Richard Threlfall – **richard.threlfall@mrc.ukri.org**
- board secretary and lead on multimorbidity: Dr Ivan Pavlov – **ivan.pavlov@mrc.ukri.org**
- programme manager for endocrinology: Dr Andrew Crawford – **andrew.crawford@mrc.ukri.org**.

Other contacts

- for queries about submitting your application using Je-S, email **jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org** or call 01793 444164
- for general enquiries about your application contact **psmb@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**
- 01793 416440.

Additional info

Supporting documents

- **Je-S how to apply guidance (PDF, 190KB)**

Timeline

○ **15 February 2021**
Opening date

○ **19 May 2021 16:00**
Closing date

○ **5 October 2021**
Shortlisting date

○ **3-4 November 2021**
Meeting dates

Related content

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

Population and Systems Medicine Board membership