

MRC molecular and cellular medicine new investigator research grant: Sep 2021

Opportunity status:	Upcoming
Funders:	Medical Research Council (MRC)
Funding type:	Grant
Publication date:	15 March 2021
Opening date:	14 June 2021
Closing date:	1 September 2021 16:00 UK time

Last updated: 15 March 2021

These Molecular and Cellular Medicine 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.

[Open all](#)

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 \(MRC website\)](#) (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 molecular and cellular medicine research. There are similar opportunities across [other areas of medical research within our remit \(MRC website\)](#) including:

- infections and immunity
- population and systems medicine
- neurosciences and mental health
- 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
- 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: the MRC's new investigator research grant \(YouTube\)](#).

What we're looking for

The Molecular and Cellular Medicine Board funds research into basic biological mechanisms or technologies relevant to human health and disease.

We aim to increase understanding of:

- the structure and function of molecules and complexes
- the cellular environment during development and mature states
- how biological systems respond to challenges (for example, drugs and toxins) and diseases.

We lead MRC's investments in cancer, from fundamental discovery science to epidemiology, experimental medicine and early translation.

Research focused on specific organ systems or diseases (with the exception of cancer and haematology) is normally supported through our other research boards.

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

- cell biology
- structural biology and biophysics
- molecular and functional genetics, epigenetics, genomics
- developmental and stem cell biology (excluding neurobiology)
- regenerative medicine
- molecular haematology
- development of new tools and technologies relevant to the Molecular and Cellular Medicine Board remit, such as nanotechnology, chemical biology and synthetic biology
- medical bioinformatics (including biostatistics, computational biology and systems biology)
- cancer
- toxicology and adverse health effects of environmental exposure
- pharmacology.

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

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
- administration duties
- 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 \(MRC website\)](#).

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 Molecular and Cellular Medicine Board funding are usually around January, May and September although sometimes dates can change so check the funding finder for details.

[Search funding opportunities.](#)

You can submit to any one of the available deadlines in the year.

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 \(Je-S\)](#).

For more information, please read the [Je-S how to apply guidance \(PDF, 140KB\)](#).

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: New investigator research grants (NIRG) only research boards Sep 2021.

Guidance for applicants

Our [guidance for applicants \(MRC website\)](#) 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 and 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 \(MRC website\)](#).

How we will assess your application

We will assess your application against [our applicant skills and experience criteria \(MRC website\)](#) (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 \(MRC website\)](#).

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 \(MRC website\)](#).

Contact details

Get advice on your application or choosing a board

Email: mcmb@mrc.ukri.org

Or contact the programme manager most relevant to your research area:

Cell biology, developmental biology and the physical science interface

Dr Holger Apitz

Email: holger.apitz@mrc.ukri.org

Structural studies and biophysics

Dr Anne McGavigan

Email: anne.mcgavigan@mrc.ukri.org

Genomics, gene regulatory networks and synthetic biology

Dr Tim Cullingford

Email: tim.cullingford@mrc.ukri.org

Environmental health, pharmacology and toxicology

Dr Graham Campbell

Email: graham.campbell@mrc.ukri.org

Cancer

Dr Mariana Delfino-Machin

Email: mariana.delfino-machin@mrc.ukri.org

Regenerative medicine

Dr Charlotte Durkin

Email: charlotte.durkin@mrc.ukri.org

See [our science and contacts \(MRC website\)](#).

Get help with using Je-S

Contact Je-S Helpdesk.

Email: jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org

Telephone: 01793 444164

Discuss MRC policy and eligibility

Contact our research funding policy and delivery team.

Email: rfpd@mrc.ukri.org

Telephone: 01793 416440

Additional info

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

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

Supporting documents

- [Je-S how to apply – new investigator research grant \(PDF, 140KB\)](#)
 - [New investigator research grant CV and salary template \(DOCX, 25KB\)](#)
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Timeline

○ **14 June 2021**
Opening date

○ **1 September 2021**
Closing date

○ **7 January 2022**
Shortlisting

○ **10 to 11 February 2022**
Meeting dates

Related content

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

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

[Guidance for applicants \(MRC website\)](#)

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

[Peer review process \(MRC website\)](#)

[Information about full economic costing \(MRC website\)](#)

[MRC terms and conditions \(MRC website\)](#)

[MRC industry collaboration agreements \(MRC website\)](#)

Related opportunities

[MRC molecular and cellular medicine new investigator research grant: May 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](#).