

MRC Transition Support Award 2021/2022

Scheme Objectives

- facilitate the transition of MRC fellows into secure posts beyond their fellowship,
- maximise MRC's investment in current intermediate fellowships (Career Development Awards – CDA and Clinician Scientist Fellowships – CSF),
- increase the number of individuals establishing substantive research programmes in the period following their fellowship by supporting progressive career planning by fellows and institutions.

Who are we looking to support?

This scheme will provide short-term support of up to two years to intermediate MRC fellows who have made extensive progress and demonstrated productivity but have not yet achieved the outputs that will enable them to meet their full potential or be in a position to secure their next position. Eligible MRC fellows (CDA or CSF award holders) will be in the final 12-18 months of their fellowship.

The Transition Support award is specifically designed for fellows whose research momentum has been impacted by multiple issues that have affected their productivity and subsequent outputs. They will have progressed their research and met many of the criteria for research leadership already (see assessment criteria), however due to genuine mitigating circumstances they will not yet be competitive for the next funding stage.

Financially, the MRC will support 50% of the fellows' salary, salary costs of key staff members and a small consumables budget for the duration of the award. The host research organisation will need to provide the other 50% salary commitment for the duration of the award and will be expected to commit to a secure open-ended position for the fellow by the end of the award, in line with their institutional policies. This should be clearly outlined in a Letter of Support from a senior authority within the host research organisation. This reflects our expectation of a commitment from research organisations to support talented researchers at this level. The expectation remains that 100% of the fellow's contracted working time is focussed on their research, training and development, as per MRC's standard fellowship terms and conditions.

Candidates will need to demonstrate the added value that a Transition Support award will offer them, providing evidence of their research potential, clearly articulating how their proposed plans for the resources and time requested would enable them to regain research momentum and provide a platform towards research leadership.

Fellows will not be permitted to transfer underspend from their current fellowship to the Transition Support award so applicants should take this into account when requesting research costs for activities that will take place during the Transition Support award period, and when choosing a start date for their Transition Support award. If there is significant funding remaining on the fellowship, candidates should instead consider a no-cost extension through our Post-Award Amendment process (see below).

Who is the scheme NOT aimed at?

A Transition Support award is NOT, in isolation, seed funding for new research projects or outputs not related to the overall aims of the MRC Fellowship award. Individuals who have already achieved the outputs required for being competitive in applying for the next funding

stage, are unlikely to be successful.

The MRC already has a [Post-Award Amendment \(PAA\)](#) mechanism which allows costed or no-cost extensions to existing MRC awards. In addition to covering statutory requirements such as parental leave and sick leave, this mechanism supports requests for non-recruitment of staff and to cover exceptional unforeseen delays which were beyond the control of the fellow. Candidates whose delays could be directly addressed by the [Post-Award Amendment \(PAA\)](#) process are unlikely to be competitive and candidates may be redirected to the PAA process.

Candidates who have previously had a PAA are still eligible to apply for Transition Support, but candidates should highlight why this support was insufficient and demonstrate why additional support via a Transition Support award is required.

A Transition Support award is not intended to cover delays or impacts solely due to COVID-19. This should be requested via the PAA process. However, it is recognised that COVID-19 is likely to have exacerbated the impact of other factors which have affected research momentum. In these cases, fellows should apply for Transition Support. Candidates who have accessed the [UKRI COVID-19 grant extension allocation \(CoA\)](#) can still apply, but they should demonstrate why further support via a Transition Support award is required as a result of delays or impacts other than COVID-19.

Candidates who are unsure whether a Transition Support award or a PAA would be more suitable for their individual circumstances are encouraged to contact fellows@mrc.ukri.org for further advice.

Assessment Criteria

Applications will be assessed in a two-step process. On submission the applications will be reviewed by the expertise of the Clinical and Non-Clinical Training and Career Development Panels. The applications will then be assessed further by a sub-group of these panels at a meeting to take place on 22nd February 2022, where a funding decision will be made. There will be no external peer review. Announcements of the final decisions will be made in March 2022.

1. Research achievements

- Has the fellow clearly made progress with their fellowship against the key deliverables and objectives of their intermediate award?
 - For example, does the current research delivery and outputs provide evidence that the fellow's career trajectory is on the path towards research leadership?
 - All achievements and outputs should be considered in evaluating the fellow's productivity, for example; *Innovative collaborations and/or networks; an ability to identify and maximise potential in others; invitations to seminar/conferences; opportunities to access career development support, such as mentoring and professional training development, and relevant training courses; presentation at scientific conferences and public science fairs; influence their research field e.g. participation in peer review, committee membership, contribution to publications.*
- Is there clear evidence the fellow has been unable to consolidate their fellowship due to mitigating circumstances?
 - Has the fellow evidenced their productivity to date and any mitigating strategies to counter these circumstances;
 - Are these circumstances distinct from those covered by the current [Post Award Amendment](#) route for additional support?
- Has the fellow made a strong case that without a Transition Support award they will not be able to fully establish themselves as an independent researcher and be competitive at the next funding stage?
- Does the application provide evidence that additional funding will enable the fellow to maximise their potential and competitiveness by consolidating and expanding existing work?
- Can outputs be achieved within the time frame requested?

2. Leadership, profile and influence

- Has the fellow clearly articulated and evidenced their research leadership potential?
- Has the fellow established their research niche?
- Is there evidence of building collaborations and networks and recognition of their research in the community and on an international level?



- Is there evidence the fellow has learnt new skills or spent time within industry or in a second research centre, as described in the original award?
- Has the fellow demonstrated awareness of their research field, providing evidence of how they have/are influencing the field and the wider agenda?
- Have they clearly demonstrated they have been maximising potential of staff employed on their award?

3. Institutional support

- Is there a strong letter of support from the host research organisation outlining how they have supported the fellow to date (if applicable)?
- Is the research organisation committed to supporting the fellow to become a research leader, continuing to provide the appropriate support and mentorship?
- Is the fellow's research time protected to allow 100% of their contracted working time for research, training and development?
- Does the research organisation provide 50% salary commitment for the duration of the award?
- Does the research organisation provide a commitment to a secure open-ended position at the end of the award in line with their institutional policies?

The Application

The guidance below is supplementary to the [Guidance for Fellowship Applicants](#) and both should be read ahead of completing your proposal.

1. Je-S proposal form

All proposals must be completed and submitted through the Je-S system by **16:00 (BST) on 14th October 2021**. The call will be available to select on Je-S from 3rd September 2021. Certain sections and headings in the proposal form are set out below, along with a description of the information required in each section. Please note these sections should be filled out in relation to the work being undertaken during the Transition Support Award, and not your existing fellowship award. The content of some of these sections may therefore be brief.

Project title: The title of the project should read as follows “MRC Transition Support Award: [Title of CDA/CSF]”

Objectives: Please list the objectives of your proposal for the Transition Support Award, in order of priority.

Summary: Provide a plain English summary that can be understood by a non-academic audience of the proposal for the Transition Support Award, explaining the overarching aims of your existing fellowship, the progress made to date, and how the Transition Support Award would provide a platform towards research leadership. The section is limited to 4000 characters, including spaces.

Technical summary: Provide a more in-depth summary aimed at reviewers (academic and non-academic) who have some knowledge of the areas of research involved. The section is limited to 2000 characters, including spaces and returns.

Other support: Support on current projects from other sources. Applicants must declare any relevant financial support which has been awarded or applied for. This should include any funding that has been obtained or requested for any aspect of the project currently being applied for by the applicant.

Related proposal: Please include the MRC Grant reference, MR/XXXXXXXX, of your existing CDA/CSF Fellowship award.

Staff: Fellows are expected to spend 100% of their contracted working time on the award but should only include costs for 50% of their salary. The host research organisation will need to provide the other 50% salary commitment.

Honorary Clinical Contract and Clinical Details: Applicants from a clinical background must also complete the ‘Honorary Clinical Contract and Clinical Details’ section. Applicants who are not clinically qualified should answer ‘No’ to the question ‘Would an Honorary Clinical Contract be sought?’ and enter ‘NA’ or ‘0’ in the subsequent required fields.

2. Case for support (maximum of four sides of A4)

The Transition Support Award is specifically designed for fellows whose research momentum has been impacted by multiple/complex issues that have affected their productivity and subsequent outputs. They will have progressed their research and met many of the criteria for

research leadership already (see assessment criteria), however due to genuine mitigating circumstances they will not yet be competitive for the next funding stage.

The case for support should outline:

1) Progress made to date with the fellowship

Please detail progress made with the key deliverables and objectives of the fellowship, any arising research achievements, and demonstration of research leadership potential, profile and influence. All achievements and outputs should be highlighted, such as undertaking training opportunities, national/international collaborations, evidence of standing/influence within the field and the community, track record of effectively managing your own research staff, dissemination of research outcomes. Unpublished data may be included to support your application.

2) Why you consider that you are not yet competitive for the next funding stage

Please provide rationale for why you have been unable to consolidate your fellowship due to mitigating circumstances and be competitive for the next funding stage. Detail any delays or unexpected issues that have arisen during your fellowship and note any mitigating strategies taken to counter these circumstances.

3) Added value that a Transition Support Award would provide

Please provide evidence of the added value that a Transition Support Award would provide and how it will enable you to fully establish yourself as an independent researcher, maximising your potential and competitiveness at the next funding stage. Clearly articulate how your proposed plans for the resources and time requested would provide a platform towards research leadership.

4) Institutional support

Transition Support Award applicants should outline how their host organisation have and will continue to support them towards research leadership. Fellows may choose to move institution for the period of Transition Support Award. If this is the case, applicants should explain why this will be beneficial for their career development.

3. Justification of resources (maximum of two sides of A4)

Applicants may request up to two years funding, based on the needs of the candidate and the project. Anticipated costs would include salary costs (at 50%), continuity of existing research staff, a small consumables budget and overhead costs. The support for new team members would only be considered in exceptional circumstances. There is no limit on the level of resource applied for. It is expected that a typical application would request up to a maximum of £400k. All awards will be made at 80% FEC.

4. Data management plan (maximum of three sides of A4)

The data management plan should be used as an opportunity to describe how the data are going to be managed. If there are no significant differences from the Data Management Plan in your original application, you may use the same plan.

5. Letter of support (maximum of two sides of A4 or equivalent on headed paper or sent by email)

There is a mandatory letter of support required from a senior authority within the host organisation for the duration of the Transition Support Award.

This letter of support must summarise:

- The applicant's suitability for a Transition Support Award
- How they have supported the fellow to date (if applicable)
- The commitment the department will make to mentor and support the fellow
- Confirmation of the commitment to 50% of the fellow's salary
- Confirmation that research time will be protected to allow 100% of their contracted working time for research, training and development, for the duration of the Transition Support Award funded period
- A commitment to providing a secure open-ended position at the end of the award, in line with institutional policies.

6. CV (maximum of two sides of A4)

The fellow must include an up-to-date CV, using the MRC Fellowship CV template. This should include details on any additional funding sought or awarded and any other relevant information.

7. Publications (maximum of one side of A4)

The fellow must include a list of relevant publications, including any that have arisen from the fellowship. This may be in preparation, under review or in press. Where relevant, data from unpublished work may be referenced in the case for support. The MRC supports the use of pre-prints.

Queries regarding the MRC Transition Support Award scheme should be directed to fellows@mrc.ukri.org