

Question and Answer Session

Medical Research Council (MRC) fellowships - transition to the new Funding Service (TFS)

The webinar and the questions and answers below focus on the MRC’s transition of fellowships to the new Funding Service (TFS). It includes information and tips for applicants and research offices on the following MRC fellowship opportunities, closing 13 September 2023:

- Clinical research training fellowship (CRTF)
- Clinician scientist fellowship (CSF)
- Career development award (CDA)
- Senior non-clinical fellowships (SNCF)

Appreciating the new funding service will continue to evolve and more functionality is expected, the questions and answers below are true and correct for the 13 September 2023 closing date. Please ensure for future MRC fellowship opportunities, or for other types of opportunity, you check the guidance available at the time.

Useful links and guidance	2
Applicant eligibility	3
Resubmissions	5
Application	6
Vision and Approach	7
Diagrammatic workplan (project plan, milestones, timelines, Gantt chart etc.)	8
References	9
Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI)/ Applicant and team capability to deliver	9
Application roles	10
Sponsors and supervisors (supervisors are only required for pre-doctoral fellowships)	10
Co-investigators	11
Project partners	11
Mentors	12
Research Office	13
Supporting statements and letters of support	13
Costs	14
Specific to clinical fellowships	16
Specific to predoctoral clinical research training fellowships	19
Peer Review	20
Award rates	20
Feedback on TFS	22

Useful links and guidance

MRC fellowships - transition to the new Funding Service webinar	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGWvulujmKc
Application timelines	https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/guidance-for-applicants/application-timelines/
New staff roles	https://www.ukri.org/publications/roles-in-funding-applications/roles-in-funding-applications-eligibility-responsibilities-and-costings-guidance/
Résumé for Research and Innovation R4RI	https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/before-you-apply/resume-for-research-and-innovation-r4ri-guidance/
Embedding diversity in research design	https://www.ukri.org/about-us/mrc/our-policies-and-standards/embedding-diversity-in-research-design/
Research offices	https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/improving-your-funding-experience/how-research-offices-use-the-ukri-funding-service/ https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/improving-your-funding-experience/about-simpler-and-better-funding/
Finding an opportunity in the funding finder video	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_JMlvw3KdU
Applying for an opportunity in the funding service video	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7f6TNz8mN8&t=12s
Completing an application in the funding service video	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NIWMVBr1jc
What a research office administration account can view and do video	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDzezpCLcgU
Completing the 'resources and costs' section video	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avtey48l91Y
How to submit and manage applications and see reviews video	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avtey48l91Y
MRC responsive mode research boards - transition to the new Funding Service webinar	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icc30A_wySE

Applicant eligibility

Q: Are individuals employed at a UK university but based overseas eligible to apply?

A: Applicants are normally expected to be based in the UK, unless their research means they spend long periods overseas, or they are from eligible international Research Organisations, e.g., CERN or MRC international Units. You must be hosted by an eligible research organisation. Please contact RFPD@mrc.ukri.org to discuss your specific eligibility.

Q: Are foreign students eligible for these grants if the host organisation is in the UK?

A: Fellowship applications are welcomed from applicants of all nationalities, including those not currently based in the UK. This is subject to the fellowship being hosted by an [eligible research organisation](#).

MRC fellows are eligible for a [Global Talent visa](#) under the 'exceptional promise' category for future research leaders.

Q: For the career development award (CDA): guidance on career stage (from UKRI Skills and experience needed to win support webpage) says experience matching transition to independence includes 'typically at least one post-doctoral appointment'. Are proposals from applications with only one post-doctoral appointment accepted/encouraged? Would such a candidate be disadvantaged? Is the length of postdoctoral work considered important?

A: Please see answer to question below.

Q: Almost 12 months left for my PhD. After my PhD defense, I would like to be involved in post-doc immediately. Is it the right time if I apply in the opening round? or next is better?

A: Our postdoctoral fellowship opportunities do not have eligibility rules based on years of post-doctoral experience. To be considered suitable for a fellowship opportunity, applicants have to be able to clearly demonstrate that their skills and experience at the time of their application match those at the corresponding career stage as outlined on the [Skills and experience needed to win support](#) webpage. We will consider any career breaks, flexible working and changes in discipline when assessing your research experience and current track record.

For example, applicants for a career development award would need to demonstrate that their skills and experience at the time of their application match those at the **transition to independence career stage**, demonstrating productivity across past appointments and an upward trajectory with clear plans to establish their own research niche. It would be unusual for someone still undertaking their PhD to be able to demonstrate that they have these critical skills.

Please note all our fellowship opportunities are not solely a mechanism of grant funding, nor post-doctoral positions, they are personal awards to enable a step-change in your research career.

Since there is a maximum of two chances to apply for a type of fellowship, we would encourage individuals to speak with their research network about whether it is the right time to apply for a

fellowship and consider which skills and experience they need to build to ensure an application is competitive.

Q: For the career development award (CDA): Can you clarify if you are allowed to apply as a new assistant professor? You don't have to be on a proleptic appointment at the time of application, but need to transfer to a proleptic appointment if awarded the fellowship?

A: Please see answer to question below.

Q: For CDA can you hold your 1st academic position (eg tenure track), while applying for this fellowship? Are there any time restrictions (eg. the first 6-12 months of the post)?

A: All applicants to MRC fellowships must articulate why a fellowship is the best way to achieve their research goals. Individuals who currently hold a permanent position are eligible to apply if they can:

- demonstrate that a fellowship would be the best way to support their long-term career goals and chosen career route
- provide a clear rationale why a fellowship would be different to their current role. As part of this expectation, applicants may be planning to move away from their current department, or will describe clear pathways by which they will differentiate the fellowship position from their current role
- clearly state that 100% of their time would be dedicated to the fellowship to focus on research, shielded from other professional commitments.

Applicants cannot continue to hold an existing position and a fellowship at the same time. If awarded a fellowship, the permanent position would need to be relinquished for the duration of the fellowship (e.g., switched to a proleptic appointment). Applicants wishing to retain an existing position and combine this with research funding, should consider funding options under one of the grant funding opportunities

Q: I am unsure whether to apply for a career development award (CDA) or a senior non-clinical fellowship (SNCF). I have a small team at my institute, but funding has been from non-traditional routes. I feel I should go for SNCF, but I think I will be up against more established PIs. I was under the impression CDAs were for young post-docs?

A: SNCF applicants are proven independent researchers with a track record of excellence in their scientific field who are ready to make the transition to research leadership. Applicants for this fellowship should have a track record of nationally competitive research and managing their own independent research group and clear plans to develop into an internationally recognised leader in the field.

CDA applicants are not expected to be fully independent at the time of application. Applicants for this fellowship should be able to show productivity across past appointments and an upward trajectory and demonstrate clear plans to establish their own research niche.

If you already lead a team of researchers and carry out your own independent research, then we would consider you to have already made that step, and not be eligible for a CDA.

If you've had a more non-standard path to your current position, please feel free to contact a Programme Manager at fellows@mrc.ukri.org and they can discuss this with you.

Q: Are any NHS hospital/trust eligible for UKRI funding? When I have tried to enter my NHS trust on the application form - it is not coming up as an option

A: NHS Trusts are eligible for funding. If your organisation is not listed, email support@funding-service.ukri.org. Please allow at least 10 working days for your organisation to be added to the Funding Service.

Q: What is the difference between career development awards (CDA) and clinician scientist fellowships (CSF), is CSF more independent?

A: Please see answer to below question.

Q: Is the career development awards (CDA) open to both clinical and non-clinical applicants?

Both the CDA and CSF fellowships:

- aim to support researchers **transition to independence**, enabling talented researchers to lead their own research plans and establish their own research team to make the transition to independent investigator
- provide 100% of the fellow's salary and project costs for up to five years to enable them to focus on their research, allowing them to limit the other activities they undertake.
- welcome applications from across all areas of MRC's remit to improve human health, ranging from basic studies with relevance to mechanisms of disease, to translational and developmental clinical research.
- have no limit to the amount of funding you can request, but requests must be appropriate to the project, and you must be able to justify the amount you need to meet the objectives of your proposed research. Awards are made under the full economic costing framework.

However, the CSF opportunity is designed to support the dual academic-clinician career pathway, offering outstanding researchers the flexibility to dedicate up to 20% of their time to clinical sessions as part of a full-time award, allowing them to maintain clinical skills.

Researchers who are not clinically qualified, or who are clinically qualified but do not plan to be clinically active should apply for a CDA. Clinically qualified applicants are expected to apply for a CSF.

Resubmissions

Q: For the pre-doctoral career research training fellowship (CRTF) if applicant is not successful at the first round when can they apply again? And is it correct that applicants can only apply twice?

A: Please see answer to below question.

Q: How many times can we apply for a career development award (CDA)?

A: Applicants may apply for any MRC fellowship type(including CDA) only twice, regardless of the extent of changes to the application. Changing your organisation or project does not reset your number of previous applications.

Q: If we applied in the same cycle last year (deadline Sep 2022), can we apply again this cycle if our project is more defined in the PHD?

A: If you're unsuccessful in your first application you're able to apply to the fellowship opportunity once more. Applicants should allow at least a year between submissions whether applying to the same or a different fellowship. However, we do appreciate that timelines can be strict for our applicants to this opportunity, who may have already stepped out of programme to start their research or are restricted due to their training timelines. If you wish to resubmit within 12 months of your first application, please contact the relevant programme manager to discuss fellows@mrc.ukri.org

Q: Is there a place to provide “response to review” for a resubmission?

A: There is a 'related applications' question in the application (Word count: 500)

If submitting a resubmission, you can describe how the application differs and how feedback on the previous application has been considered and acted on.

We would not expect this to be a line-by-line rebuttal but an overview of how key areas of concern have been addressed in summary form. Applicants can also take this opportunity to highlight any new preliminary data or personal achievements since their last application.

Application

Q: Is it possible to get a draft application form for the various fellowships, so that we can see the sections / wordcounts etc., before starting an application? Or is this only available when the application is started?

A: The application questions and word counts can be found on the relevant [funding finder](#) page for the fellowship opportunity under the 'how to apply' section.

Q: Can we put figures in the main part of the application? Or only in the additional page?

A: For these MRC fellowship opportunities in the new funding service, any questions that require you to complete the answer in a text box must be text only responses. For these opportunities it is not possible to embed images into the text boxes in the system. If the question is asking you to upload a document, then you can put images anywhere into the document, it is up to you how many, and they must be within the total page limits that are stated for that question.

Q: Can I ask the provisional start date should an applicant be successful?

A: Typically, for all MRC applications the anticipated start date should be realistic and would normally be between one month and six months after the date of the decision-making board or panel. Once a grant has been issued, grant holders are required to make every effort to start on

the agreed date. The start of the grant may be delayed by up to 3 months from the start date shown in the offer letter, the duration of the grant remaining unchanged.

Vision and Approach

Q: The application guidelines state that you can add more reproducibility information, including statistical analysis, in the extra page; but does this mean all statistical analyses should be described here, or only those that relate to reproducibility?

A: This question is referring to the vision and approach application question and the document that you are asked to upload. The vision and approach document varies in length, dependent on the type of fellowship you are applying for (as outlined in the table below). You can include statistical information, other methodology or methodological information within the main page limit of your vision and approach documents in whatever way you find best to explain your approach to the research.

Fellowship type	Vision and Approach	Optional annexes		Max page limit incl optional pgs.
		Visual project plan	Reproducibility information	
Clinical Research Training Fellowship	4 pages	1 page	1 page	6 pages
Clinician Scientist Fellowship	6 pages	1 page	1 page	8 pages
Career Development Award	6 pages	1 page	1 page	8 pages
Senior non-clinical fellowship	12 pages	1 page	1 page	14 pages

There is an additional, optional page that you can also use should you want to provide additional information on reproducibility, and to explain the steps taken to ensure the reliability and robustness of the chosen methodology and experimental design. It is expected that professional statistical (or other relevant) advice would be sought in putting this section together.

Additional reproducibility information should be a clearly identified page within the “Vision and Approach” document. The additional page cannot be used to provide any other information. Applications misusing the additional page will be rejected.

Q: Should information on career progression be provided within the “Vision and Approach” document? The guidance has changed since the pre-announcement.

A: Follow the guidance on how to apply in the full funding opportunity published on 20 July as guidance has been expanded and updated since the pre-announcement.

The Vision and Approach question asks you to upload a document describing your research plans. There is also a separate “career progression” application question, your response can be up to 700 words.

Q: How much should the research environment you are proposing to carry out the research in (its benefits, facilities, support for you etc.) be discussed in the 'Approach' section of "Vision and Approach", as opposed to the separate 'Career Progression' section?

A: In the Approach section you can write about your host organisation's environment and how it will help you to deliver the research you've proposed. Separately, in the Career Progression section, you can talk about how your host organisation's environment will support you personally in your career.

Q: Vision and Approach PDF - you mentioned text has to be point 11. Does this also apply to figure legends, and labels within the figures? What about references?

A: For all attachments text must be 11-point Arial (or equivalent sans serif font) and page margins of at least 2cm. References should be listed within in the "References" section of the application (Word count: 1,000)

Q: What is the expected balance of each question in the Vision and Approach? There was a guide for the former Case of Support but we do not see anything in the new format.

A: When moving over to the new funding service guidance on structuring was considered, like the previous, case for support guidance. However, we are introducing a new system and new criteria and want to understand how applicants can use it most effectively. The system is laid out much more intuitively, giving you information on what the assessors are looking for. As you know what is being assessed, it's important to address those points and provide information to make it really clear what your vision is, and how you're going to address the questions that you've proposed. Also, some of the information you would have previously provided in the case for support is now requested in response to other questions such as career progression, meaning the distribution of information through the application has changed.

Diagrammatic workplan (project plan, milestones, timelines, Gantt chart etc.)

Q: Is the project plan more like a Gantt chart or more pictorial?

A: It can be either. Using a Gantt chart for the project plan is suggested as an example, it can be any other type of visual plan, whatever is your preference and most suitable to explain the plan for your project.

Q: Is the Gantt chart covered in the diagrammatic workplan or is this also an allowed extra page

We want one project plan within your application, sometimes it's referred to as a Gantt chart, sometimes a diagrammatic project plan, they are the same thing. You can provide one visual representation of your project plans.

References

Q: Is the references section there to list our own references, or references that support the information provided in our vision and application section? Or both?

A: Please see question below.

Q: There is a references section, can this be used to list references used in multiple different sections of the form i.e., not just the vision and approach document but also the narrative CV etc. (to help detail publication record)?

A: Yes, the references section can be used to refer to publications or any other types of outputs or resource that relate to any other sections of the application. You may wish to explain, how they are related to make it easier for the assessors.

Q: Can hyperlinks be made in each citation?

A: Hyperlinks can only be included for any type of references to publications or other outputs and shouldn't be used to expand the application itself.

When referring to outputs such as publications, please provide these as a digital object identifier (DOI) which can be hyperlinked to the publication where possible.

We advise you not to include hyperlinks, as assessors are not obliged to access the information they lead to or consider it in their assessment of your application. More information on this can be found here: <https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/before-you-apply/resume-for-research-and-innovation-r4ri-guidance/>

Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI)/ Applicant and team capability to deliver

Q: For the résumé for research and innovation (R4RI) should it include a list of publications? I was told for the BBSRC R4RI that I could mention only 2 or 3 key publications? Thanks.

A: There are no rules on the number of publications you should include. However, you should consider the number of words you have to convey your capability, track record, skills and experience to do the fellowship. We advise being selective and using key pertinent publications to show your skills, experience and capabilities.

Q: Can journal names be indicated in the capability section and Vision and Approach section to explain own achievements?

A: UKRI supports the San Francisco declaration on research assessment (DORA), <https://www.hfsp.org/Declaration-on-Research-Assessment>, so we advise assessors to consider the content of publications not where they are published

Q: Is there any section in the full application where we have to state our full list of publications?

A: No, we do not require a full publication list. Selected publication may be included in the applicant capability to deliver and references sections.

Application roles

Q: Can you please talk in a bit more detail about what names to include in the core team section i.e., should this include sponsors as well as project partner? I have a sponsor who will be supporting the fellowship generally and a project partner at an external institution who will have a more direct supervisory role for some aspects of my project.

A: In the core team section include your name as fellow and your sponsor as professional enabling staff.

If you will be requesting funding for any research or technical staff include these in the core team, as specialist, technician or research and innovation associate, as appropriate.

Project partners are not in the core team, project partner details are entered in the project partners' section.

Please see the Q&A below for further clarification on roles.

Sponsors and supervisors (supervisors are only required for pre-doctoral fellowships)

Q: For the career development award (CDA) - could you clarify the difference between supervisor(s), project partners, and sponsors?

A: Please see response to below questions.

Q: Is a Sponsor a referee in normal wording, who usually provide a letter of recommendation in normal wording? Or is this a person who provides practical technical advice? How is this person different from a partner?

A: For all post-doctoral fellowships you need at least one sponsor (not a supervisor).

The sponsor is not expected to fulfil a supervisory role during the award, but act as a supporter for the application. The sponsor should have expertise in the scientific area of the application and will act as guarantor for the quality of the proposed research, suitability of the candidate and level of training and development the department will provide.

The sponsor or sponsors will need to be assign as "professional enabling staff" within the Core team in TFS.

Your sponsor will need to provide a statement of support within TFS. A sponsor statement should be up to 1,000 words. Only use the full word count (3,000 words) if you have multiple sponsors.

A project partner is any collaborating researchers or organisations (other than the lead research organisation) that will make specific contributions (cash or in-kind) to the project.

Q: How are additional sponsors different from project partners?

A: Sponsors, advise guide and support you during the fellowship. Project partners bring a defined contribution to your fellowship either a financial contribution or 'in kind'.

Q: Does the sponsor need to be to in the same institution and/or department?

A: You need at least one sponsor from the organisation where you propose to host the fellowship. If you would like to work with additional sponsors e.g. for multidisciplinary expertise they can be from any organisation.

Co-investigators

Q: Can we add international co-investigators to the career development award application? Is there a limit on the number of international or domestic co-investigators?

A: As a fellowship is a personal award co-investigators are not permitted. You may include any number of partners or collaborators.

Project partners

Q: Is a Partner a collaborator in normal wording?

A: To answer this question we are going to look at the different types of collaborators. A project partner is a type of collaborator. A project partner is a collaborator that is bringing something to your fellowship, contributing either in cash terms or in kind, to help your project be achievable. They should not be located at your research organisation. If you define them as a project partner, you need to provide their details and the contributions they are bringing in the project partner section of the application.

You may have other academic collaborators with whom you are sharing knowledge or data, but this is not as established or formalised as a project partner relationship. These **should not** be listed as project partners. You may describe these collaborations in your vision and approach document.

Industrial collaborators can also be included as project partners, you may need to complete the industrial collaboration framework question, which covers how Intellectual Property will be managed and any financial contributions to the project.

Q: Is a collaborator (i.e., for intellectual input) entered as a 'project partner' and listed in the core team too?

A: Collaborators, are potentially included as project partners or not, depending on how they will contribute to your fellowship. They could be simply named in the vision and approach document or you may include collaborators as project partners, but they are not part of the core team, regardless of the type of collaborator they are. You will not see collaborator roles in in the core team section of the application.

Q: How is a project partner entered in the funding service (TFS)?

A: There is a specific question in TFS asking for project partners. Each project partner must provide a statement of support. If your application involves industry partners, they must provide additional information if the team project partner falls within the industry collaboration framework.

Q: Project partners/international collaborators, can they be costed in as co-investigators or research assistants?

A: Project partners provide contributions to the delivery of a project and should not normally seek to claim funds from that project. However, if there are specific circumstances where project partners do require funding for minor costs such as travel and subsistence, this will be paid at 80% fEC.

You cannot have co-investigators/co-leads on a fellowship application as a personal award.

Salaries should only be sought for members of staff who will be involved in delivering the aims and objectives of the proposed research. This may include postdocs, research fellows, research assistants, research nurses, technicians, statisticians, technologists, methodologists etc. (this list is not exhaustive).

Mentors

Q: Is a named mentor essential? Can it be from the same department, or do you advise a mentor from a different department/university?

A mentor is someone who provides independent career advice and is expected to be distinct from a sponsor or supervisor. We recommend that you have a mentor to support your career development; this could be done informally or formally through a mentoring programme. Whilst having a mentor is recommended for all Fellows it is not a requirement, and you may submit an application without a nominated mentor.

Watch our video on [why mentoring matters for a career in medical sciences](#), including:

- why mentoring matters
- the benefits of mentoring
- how to get the most out of a mentoring relationship

MRC funded Career Development Award holders, Clinician Scientist, Senior Clinical and Senior Non-Clinical fellows are eligible for [The Academy of Medical Sciences mentoring programme](#).

Mentors should not be listed in the core team. If a mentor has been identified, they should be named in the response to the “Mentors” question and they should provide a statement of support detailing how they will support you.

Q: Does the mentor need to be from the same organisation?

A: No, a mentor can be from any organisation.

Q: Can the mentor be a retired member of staff?

A: Yes.

Q: Can your PhD supervisor be your host institution mentor?

A: A mentor is expected to be distinct from your current sponsor or supervisor.

Research Office

Q: After the applicant submits the application on the UKRI, will the research office have to approve the application prior to the deadline? How can the applicant contact the research office?

A: Please see answer to question below

Q: Is the research office administrator approval needed for pre-doctoral CRTF? Where would we enter the details of the research office?

A: Yes, the research office needs to approve your application, your application will be submitted to the research office for final checks before final submission to the MRC. When you start your application, you will be asked to select the organisation where you will undertake the fellowship. Most UK research organisations have a research office account set up in TFS, so as soon as you start your application the research office in that organisation should be able to see your application. Functionality is planned for research offices to allow co-editing but is not available yet.

Your research organisation should be able to provide research office contact details. If you are unsure who to contact, please do speak to your supervisor or sponsor.

You should ensure you contact the research office as soon as possible prior to applying. Staff within the research offices can provide a range of support and guidance. Additionally, there may be internal processes that need to be followed and internal deadlines that you need to work to in order to apply.

Supporting statements and letters of support

Q: Statements of sponsors and partners are copied & pasted from what are written by those people? Who assures the validity in this case?

A: We ask you to include the name and position of the person providing the sponsors statement within your answer. Your application passes through your research office before being submitted to UKRI to verify this. For project partners you are asked to upload a signed letter of support.

Q: If a university abroad will co-host some funds do, they classify as partners? They are not offering any finances. Is a letter from them enough to use for application

A: It is unclear the exact nature of this relationship and we would advise that you get in touch with us to discuss further: fellows@mrc.ukri.org

If you intend to receive training at an international organisation, they would be viewed as a second centre. You can provide details of the work that will take place as part of the proposed fellowship at a second centre within the “Vision and Approach” document. A letter of support from the second centre head of department must be provided. All MRC fellowships provide support for the costs incurred by undertaking training at a second centre, these costs should be justified within the “Resources and cost justification” section.

A Project Partner is a third-party organisation, or third-party person not employed on a grant, who provides specific contributions either in cash or in kind to a project. Project partners provide contributions to the delivery of a project and therefore should not normally seek to claim funds from that project. Each project partner must provide a statement of support.

Costs

Q: What is the maximum funding allowed for each fellowship scheme? Or is there a general ballpark figure we can consult (from previous applications, etc?).

Q: Is a theoretical maximum amount exist for each fellowship?

A: There is no limit to the amount of funding you can request (except for the predoctoral CRTF), however as an example awards previously made through our senior fellowships have typically not exceeded £2 million (80% full economic cost).

We encourage you to consider whether the costs requested within your application are essential for the work, and whether the importance and scientific potential justify funding on the scale requested.

Q: Is inflation being considered when judging value for money, considering salaries will have to be raised in applications?

A: We recognise there is a global increase in application costs due to current inflation and cost of living crises. Overall, we are looking to see that costs are fully justified, comprehensive and appropriate, represent the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes and maximise potential outcomes and impacts.

Please note MRC budgets have not been changed to reflect inflation. To find out more about how UK Research and Innovation’s (UKRI) budget is determined please see:

<https://www.ukri.org/about-us/who-we-are/our-budget/>

Q: Is there a maximum staffing limit for a career development award (CDA)?

A: Please see answer to below questions.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about costings, please, what is allowed in terms of personnel on a clinician scientist fellowship (CSF)?

A: Please see answer to below question.

Q: How many CDA awardees have additional team members e.g. a technician? Do applicants commonly include this or tend to just apply for themselves only?

A: Where required (and if the terms of the fellowship allow) support for technicians, research and innovation associates and other staff may be requested.

Typically, on successful CDA and CSF applications we see requests for 1 – 2 support staff posts; a technician and/or research and innovation associate (e.g., a PDRA).

When making requests for staff you should consider the following:

- what will their input be to the project (e.g., link it to a specific area, work package, method etc.)?
- how will they complement your skill-set?
- how will you supervise them and support their career development?
- how will you build your research team to enable your transition to independent investigator?
- do you need input from specialists to ensure delivery of any parts of the project (e.g., statistician, bioinformatician etc.)?
- when will you need their input and what % of time will they need to work on the project?

Q: Can you hire and supervisor PhD students as a CDA holder?

A: You cannot request funding from MRC for a PhD student as part of an MRC application (fellowships, research grants etc.). For information on how MRC supports studentships please see: <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/developing-people-and-skills/mrc/mrc-studentships/>

You should speak to your research organisation and local research support office if you wish to supervise a PhD whilst undertaking an MRC postdoctoral fellowship.

As part of a full-time award, you can spend up to six hours a week on non-fellowship activities (e.g., other projects, teaching, etc.) as long as they do not compromise the fellowship project and your training.

Q: For the career development award (CDA), do you cover CPD training, clinical research costs, and public engagement please?

A: Yes, you can request funding for these items as part of a fellowship application. You will need to justify the request within the application, and we encourage you to consider whether the costs requested are essential for the work.

Please note that funding for CPD training cannot be requested where already included in the estates/indirect costs of the research organisation (i.e., no double funding).

For further guidance on NHS costs please see: <https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/guidance-for-applicants/costs-we-fund/3-5-nhs-costs/>

For further information and support regarding public involvement and engagement please see: <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/public-engagement/public-engagement-mrc/>

Q: How much time are we allowed to spend in the second centre if the fellowship is for 3 years, please?

A: Please see answer to below questions.

Q: Can the 12 months away from the host organisation be spent at only or at multiple secondary institutions?

A: Please see answer to below question.

Q: When you say partners at a “second” academic center, do you mean you can literally only be at one other center, or can there be multiple second centers?

A: MRC is supportive of fellows who wish to spend part of their fellowship carrying out research at a second academic centre, either within the UK or overseas, or with an industrial partner to benefit from unique training opportunities that cannot be achieved as effectively within the academic host institution. Applicants may spend up to twelve months of their award at a second organisation. Applicants intending to spend longer periods abroad should contact MRC at fellows@mrc.ukri.org before submitting an application.

If you wish to discuss the suitability of second centres, please do get in touch with the training and careers team by email fellows@mrc.ukri.org.

Q: What is the difference between a project partner and second center and who can request additional funding for travel, accommodation, and training?

A: A project partner is a third-party organisation, or third-party person not employed on a grant, who provides specific contributions either in cash or in kind to a project. Project partners provide contributions to the delivery of a project and therefore should not normally seek to claim funds from that project.

Whereas a second centre is an organisation where you intend to spend part of your fellowship to benefit from unique training opportunities. Applicants may spend up to twelve months of their award at a second organisation. All MRC fellowships provide support for the costs incurred by undertaking training at a second centre.

Q: Can I request funding for a research assistant to be hired by the project partner's institution? And if yes, must this overlap with my time spent at the project partner?

A: Please get in touch with the fellow's team to discuss this further: fellows@mrc.ukri.org.

Specific to clinical fellowships

Q: Does the term "registered healthcare professional" also apply to registered public health professionals (both clinical and non-clinical)?

A: Please see answer to below question.

Q: I am an allied health professional (Sonographer registered with ARDMS and working privately in the UK). Would I be eligible for the fellowship?

A: You can apply to our clinical fellowship opportunities if you're a registered clinically active healthcare professional. This includes, but is not limited to nurses, midwives, allied health professionals, healthcare scientists, pharmacists, clinical psychologists, doctors, dentists, general practitioners, and veterinarians.

These opportunities are designed to support the dual academic-clinician career pathway, offering outstanding researchers the flexibility to dedicate up to 20% of their time to clinical sessions as part of a full-time award, allowing them to maintain clinical skills.

You will need to be registered with a regulatory body, such as the General Medical Council or the Health and Care Professions Council or have plans in place to hold the required registration by the proposed award start date. For information on UK regulatory bodies please see: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/heenih-ica-programme-eligible-professions-and-regulators/12204>

Researchers who are not clinically qualified, or who are clinically qualified but do not plan to be clinically active, are not eligible to apply for a clinical fellowship and should instead consider our non-clinical fellowship opportunities.

If you are unsure about your eligibility, please do get in contact with us: fellows@mrc.ukri.org

Q: For clinician fellowship do clinicians have to be registered in the UK or whichever country they are based at?

For all our fellowship opportunities applications are welcomed from applicants of all nationalities, including those not currently based in the UK. This is subject to the fellowship being hosted by an [eligible research organisation](#). Typically, this is a UK-based institution.

The clinical fellowship opportunities support the dual academic-clinician career pathway and are open to registered clinically active healthcare professionals. In order to be clinically active in the UK you are required to hold registration with a regulatory body, such as the General Medical Council or the Health and Care Professions Council.

If you are clinically qualified but do not plan to be clinically active, you would need to consider our non-clinical fellowship opportunities.

If you are unsure about your eligibility, please do get in contact with us: fellows@mrc.ukri.org

Q: As a clinical trainee coming to the end of my training, can I apply for pre-doctoral funding in the last year of my training such that I would start the PhD after completing my training? Does having a CCT or not affect my eligibility?

A: Medics applying for a pre doctoral clinical research training fellowship are expected to be undertaking their specialty training and be at an appropriate point in their training to step out of programme and undertake a PhD. However, it is possible to apply to for this fellowship at other points in your training path.

Candidates applying earlier in their career will need to provide a robust case as to why they are ready to undertake research training. The MRC will be looking for confirmation as to how the

applicant will plan to complete their training and combine their research and clinical work in their future career.

Candidates who are later in their careers (up to obtaining their CCT) will need to make a robust case for why they now wish to embark on a research career. The MRC will expect the candidate to provide evidence that they are dedicated to a dual clinical-academic career path.

Although there are no strict eligibility criteria excluding consultant-level applicants from applying, the pre doctoral clinical research training fellowship only pays up to but not including a consultant-level salary.

If you are unsure about your eligibility, please do get in contact with us: fellows@mrc.ukri.org

Q: If we are ending our first year of PhD, are we still eligible to apply for a predoctoral clinical research training fellowship (CRTF) if we have 24 months remaining at the time of submission?

A: If you have already started a PhD/MD or equivalent then you may only apply for a CRTF if you have not been registered for that degree for more than 12 months (full time) by the start date of the award.

As the process from application submission to funding decision takes ~ 6 months, the assumption would be that you would have been registered for your PhD for at least 18 months (full time) by the start date of the award and therefore not be eligible to apply.

The minimum tenure of a predoctoral clinical research training fellowship is 24 months.

Q: If we have 24 months remaining at the time of submission, by the time we get accepted of funding, we will have 18 months or less left in our program. Will the funding for a predoctoral clinical research training fellowship (CRTF) retrospectively cover the previous months or does the funding only cover the months remaining after the decision is made?

A: We do not fund retrospectively, so the CRTF will not cover work that has already been done and will not cover back-dated salary.

Q: Should we be admitted to a PhD program when applying for a predoctoral clinical research training fellowship or the proposal could be for a PhD project (as part of our application to the fellowship?)

A: You do not need to have registered for a PhD at the time of submitting your application. However, we would expect you to be registered on a PhD programme at your institution before you begin the award.

Q: For the predoctoral fellowship, how does one demonstrate “ownership of your project” if you are part of a large research group, with multiple related (but distinct) projects ongoing?

A: As outlined on our skills and experience needed to win support webpage: <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/developing-people-and-skills/mrc/skills-and-experience-needed-to-win-support/> for a competitive predoctoral clinical research training fellowship

application you will need to have worked with your supervisors and host institution to develop a clear research question and project and have a clear understanding of how the research project will progress knowledge within the field and its relevance to human health.

Specific to predoctoral clinical research training fellowships

Q: Does the £25k per annum for the predoctoral fellowship include tuition fees?

A: The predoctoral clinical research training fellowship provides:

- a salary appropriate to your level of training, up to but not including NHS consultant level
- tuition fees at standard home student rate (set by the research organisation)
- up to £25,000 each year to cover consumables, equipment, and travel

The tuition fees sit outside of the £25k per year cap.

You may be able to request extra funding for:

- the cost of training at an overseas or second centre or industry placement
- the purchase and maintenance cost of animals, excluding experimental costs, related consumables, or project licences
- the costs associated with healthy volunteer studies, where costs for patient studies would be met by local clinical research networks
- the costs associated with an experimental intervention or challenge in humans and human medical imaging (such as magnetic resonance imaging), where costs cannot be met by local clinical research networks

Only these costs can be applied for above the £25,000 each year limit.

If you are requesting costs above the £25,000 each year limit you should be mindful of the scope and aims of the fellowship, with the proposed project demonstrating an appropriate level of ambition (i.e., the scale of funding must be for a PhD project not a programme grants worth of work).

Q: Does the predoctoral funding cover accommodation for travels for data collection?

A: Yes, you can request travel and subsistence costs within a predoctoral CRTF application. Typically, this request would need to fall within the £25,000 per year cap.

However, you may be able to request extra funding for the cost of training at an overseas or second centre or industry placement. If you'd like to discuss a specific example, please do email us at fellows@mrc.ukri.org.

Q: I work in the NHS in a hospital not registered with UKRI. I am planning a PhD with a University that is - in terms of salary, would my NHS salary be provided?

A: The salary requested should be in line with the level the research organisation would provide were the fellow appointed within their own pay structure.

Our expectation is that there will be no impact on your salary as university employers maintain pay parity with the NHS for their clinical academic staff. For further guidance on pay, contracts and accrued occupational benefits for clinical academics please see the following:

- <https://www.catch.ac.uk/training-careers/pay-and-contract-faqs>
- <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/MRC-080722-ClinicalPrinciplesAndObligationsJanuary2017.pdf>

Peer Review

Q: How many reviewers will we have for the CDA?

For all MRC opportunities we aim to secure three reviews for each application. More reviews may be sought for larger-scale, more complex or interdisciplinary applications. Sometimes it may not be possible to obtain three external reviews due to pressures on the academic community. With the support of our expert board and panel members, a funding decision will be taken if there is sufficient evidence. For further information on how MRC selects peer reviewers please see: <https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/guidance-for-reviewers/peer-reviews/external-peer-review/> and on the peer review process: <https://www.ukri.org/councils/mrc/guidance-for-reviewers/peer-reviews/>

Award rates

UKRI has an interactive dashboard available providing summary information on the number and value of awards and award rates: <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-do/what-we-have-funded/competitive-funding-decisions/>

Q: How many career development award (CDA) awards are available in a year? What's the competition rate?

A: Please see answer to the below question.

Q: How many pre-doctoral fellowships do you fund? i.e., how competitive is this?

A: The number of fellowship awards made will depend on the budget available and quality and strength of the applications we receive.

Budget

The overall budget for MRC to support training and careers is approved annually (April – April) by [MRC Council](#) and allocated to a range of activities with approval from our [Training and careers group](#) who are responsible for developing MRC's strategy for non-clinical and clinical training, careers and skills.

Currently MRC invests close to [£80 million per annum](#) through our [training and career development panels](#) and other support to enable careers in research and innovation.

Competition

The application process for any MRC Fellowship is rigorous, and the competition is high. Successful applicants are expected to conduct innovative and impactful research and have significant potential to become an internationally competitive research leader. For information on the assessment process and the assessment criteria [please see our assessment webpage](#).

Application and award rates (2017 – 2022)

Scheme	# Applications	# Awards	Award Rate
Clinical Training and Career Development Panel			
Clinical Research Training Fellowship	894	170	19%
Clinician Scientist Fellowship	276	41	15%
Senior Clinical Fellowship	46	10	22%
Non-Clinical Training and Career Development Panel			
Career Development Award*	691	62	9%
Senior Non-Clinical Fellowship	64	8	13%
All	1971	291	15%

*Demand for Career Development Awards (CDAs) has been significantly higher post-pandemic. The average number of applications submitted pre-2020 was ~60 applications per closing date compared with ~85 applications per closing date since 2020 resulting in award rates below 10%. However, an increase in budget has improved this resulting in an award rate for FY22/23 of ~17%.

Q: Do you have any statistics on the variables that impact the success of our application, e.g., years out of PhD?

A: We do not have any statistics on this.

There are no eligibility rules based on age or years of postdoctoral experience, applicants must clearly demonstrate that their skills and experience at the time of their application match those of the relevant career stage in the [applicant skills and experience](#) table.

Your track record will be taken into consideration if you're applying for MRC funding and the review panel will consider any time spent outside an active research environment, including through career breaks or flexible working. For further guidance see [MRC's publication on career breaks and flexible working](#).

Q: For the clinical pre-doctoral training fellowship, is it a disadvantage if we have not published anything yet?

A: For all opportunities on TFS we no longer ask for “traditional CVs” which tend to focus on a narrow range of outputs, such as publications and successful funding. Instead, you are asked to use a Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI) format to showcase the range of relevant skills you have and how this will help deliver the proposed work.

Within your response you will need to evidence how you have

- the relevant experience ([appropriate to career stage](#)) to make best use of the benefits presented by this funding opportunity to develop your career
- the right balance of skills and aptitude to deliver the proposed work, or feasible plans to develop these
- contributed to developing a positive research environment and wider community

R4RI also reduces focus on lists and quantity of outputs, and increases focus on quality of outputs, in line with [UKRI’s commitment to DORA and to responsible research assessment](#).

Feedback on TFS

Q: Please add grammar and spell check functions in the submission system

A: Thank you for your valuable feedback, we will pass this to our funding service colleagues. You can also sign up to take part in our ongoing user research email: userresearch@ukri.org or contact the funding service helpdesk for support: support@funding-service.ukri.org.