Postgraduate Fellowship Guidance for Applicants 2020-21

Email: research@stroke.org.uk Tel: 0207 566 1543

This document is intended to assist the completion of the Stroke Association Postgraduate Fellowship Application Form. The guidance is intended to be used in conjunction with the Conditions of Award.

If you have any questions, please email research@stroke.org.uk and we will get back to you as soon as we can.

Purpose of the award

The Stroke Association's research strategy aims to increase the UK funding base and capacity for stroke research across the full stroke care pathway.

These fellowships are aimed at the stroke research leaders of the future. Postgraduate Fellowships are intended to provide the necessary skills and training for the development of an independent career in stroke research, and to allow candidates the opportunity to obtain a postgraduate qualification (MPhil or PhD).

Remit of the award

The Stroke Association supports fellows who plan to conduct stroke research into clinical and applied health, including social care research. This includes research that is conducted to answer specific questions relating to day-to-day practice in health services or community settings, and which has the potential to have an impact on the health or well-being of people affected by stroke. A clear trajectory to patient benefit is essential.

We welcome applications from Allied Health Professionals and nurses, psychologists, pharmacists, and other applied researchers including but not limited to: implementation scientists, health economists, digital health and computer scientists.

The Stroke Association will not fund basic or pre-clinical research through its wholly-funded Postgraduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship schemes.
This does not apply to our joint Clinical Fellowship programmes with the Medical Research Council (MRC) or Association of British Neurologists (ABN), which are open to research across the whole pathway.

Joint funding

We welcome applications where funding from other sources has been secured to part-fund a Fellowship, such as from research charities, universities or government bodies. We would expect that the Fellowship award from the Stroke Association contribute at least 50% of the funding towards the Fellowship. Please get in touch with the Stroke Association research team in the first instance, and before submitting your application, to discuss eligibility, the most appropriate way to budget for the Fellowship costs and how to acknowledge the funding that is already secured.

Deadline for applications

The closing date for applications is **5pm 15 January 2021**.

Interview date: 28 April 2021

The Research Department will send out invitation letters for interview. Please hold the interview dates in your diary from now on until we confirm if you have been shortlisted. You will receive a letter confirming this approximately two weeks before the interview date.

Awards will be made in May 2021.

Award amount and duration

In most circumstances, the funding will be £115,000 across 3 years (£38,333 per year) subject to the fellow making satisfactory progress. Awards will be made initially as £38,333 a year for two years, with a discretionary extension of £38,333 for the third year. This funding can be allocated as appropriate by the supervisor and the host institution; however, payment of the candidate's stipend and tuition fees must be prioritised over other research expenses.

If your university only allows 4 year PhDs you are permitted to apply for this funding scheme. You can either apply before you begin the 4 year PhD or when you are in the first year of your PhD, applying for funding for the last 3 years of funding. In either case, the funding cap for the Stroke Association award is £115,000.

The postgraduate fellowship is a full-time studentship if it undertaken at 1.0FTE. Fellowships may be taken up on a part-time, pro-rata basis but the minimum working hours would be equivalent to 0.6 WTE. Applications from candidates seeking less than the full 3 years of funding will be considered in exceptional circumstances. However, the Stroke Association will need a letter from the Postgraduate Office of the host institution confirming the candidate will be able to obtain a PhD during the period of the Stroke Association funding.

Eligibility

Your proposed project must be based at a University/ NHS trust/ Statutory Social Care Organisation/ Research Institution within Great Britain or Northern Ireland.

Fellows must have at least two supervisors: one lead supervisor who bears overall responsibility for the training and the research project and a second supervisor who may be less active in supervision and support. Additional supervisors are not mandatory but are permitted.

You will be asked to give details of whether you have involved your local Research Design Service (RDS) or Clinical Trials Unit (CTU) in the development of the research proposal, including details of any discussions you have had with the RDS/CTU, improvements to the proposal as a result of the advice offered and their ongoing involvement in the project.
Please note: involvement of a CTU is **mandatory** for clinical trial applications.
For clinical trial applications, you will need to outline your lead supervisor's track record in running clinical studies and the expected role of your supervisor in ensuring the study will recruit to target and stay on track within your expected timescales.

Physicians and similar medical professionals are not eligible to apply for a Postgraduate Fellowship and should apply for a Clinical Research Training Fellowship, which will be awarded jointly by the Stroke Association and MRC. Please see the MRC website or email the Research team for further details of this.

Please contact the Research Team if you are unsure of, or have any queries regarding, your eligibility for this award.

N.B If applicable, we must have a copy of your ethical approval before you can take up the award.

Patient and Public Involvement

It is desirable for applicants to have involved people affected by stroke in the planning and development stages of their funding application, and to continue to do so should their application be successful. This involvement should be meaningful, and people affected by stroke should have a real opportunity to contribute to your research.

In the application you will be asked how you have involved public and/or patients in this research and/or the application, how you will involve public and/or patients in this research going forward, what the impacts and benefits will be for them (short and/or longer term) and how you plan to disseminate this work to them.

We are able to offer you advice or answer questions you may have about involvement. If you would like to us to contact people affected by stroke to gain feedback on your proposal we can help, however please beware that we will not support any request made to us less than eight weeks prior to the application deadline.

You can find out more about how we can help you to involve people affected by stroke in your work here.

Resubmission policy

Our resubmission policy permits you to resubmit previously unsuccessful applications to this call once. Should you choose to resubmit your unsuccessful application, we would ask that you take on board the comments of the reviewers and incorporate any suggestions accordingly.

If you are unsure whether you can resubmit an application, please contact the Research team at research@stroke.org.uk with the month and year you applied and the reference number of your application which can be found on your rejection letter.

Proposed research project

The proposed research project statement on page 5 of the application form should not exceed 2500 words. Please provide your references separately. Please include a Gantt chart/timeline as a file upload.

Your proposal statement should incorporate all of the following points, although not necessarily in the order listed below:

- Hypotheses, aims and objectives – where appropriate please consider the NIHR definitions for feasibility and pilot studies when describing your proposed project
- Background to the project
- Detailed plan of investigation, including proposed methodology
- If recruiting participants: a sample size calculation, recruitment plan, statistical expertise (which may be costed)
- Potential problems and contingency plans
- Dissemination plans
- Value of this programme to stroke research
- Please include details on the input the proposed fellow has had in the development of the project and the application. The adjudication committee will give added preference to an application where the candidate has been involved in the design of the study.

You will also be asked to provide:
- An outline of the trajectory of your research into the clinic, following the conclusion of the fellowship
- Details of qualifications to be achieved and how progress will be monitored
- Annual milestones which will be used to monitor progress of the award
- Background information about the institution where the fellow will be based
- Proposed programme of training
- Supervision and support for the fellow
- Supporting statement from the fellowship candidate
    - o Why you are applying for this fellowship and why a Postgraduate Fellowship would be beneficial to you
    - o Future careers aspirations: outline your future career plans following completion of the research project and training and gaining of your qualification.

Please see page 5 of the application form for more guidance.

We also ask you to outline details of managing **Intellectual Property** if any arise during the project, and your intention to partner with digital enterprises if your project involves the development or evaluation of **digital technology** that is intended for commercial/routine clinical use. We strongly recommend that any project using data adheres to the principles set out in the [Department of Health & Social Care conduct for data-driven health and care technology](#) code of conduct.

Details of support requested

In the main budget table of the application form we would like you to include all the funding you are requesting from the Stroke Association. You will also be required to fully justify all the funding you are requesting.

Please note that if your application is successful, the funding provided will be the figure that you have requested (unless this is queried by the panel). After the Award Acceptance form is signed, the amount awarded will not be increased if there are errors in your calculations so please ensure that the total amount requested is correct.

If you have financial support from other sources, the nature and tenure of the support should be disclosed in either the project proposal section of the application form, or in the justification textbox underneath the budget table.

Support may be sought for the following items:

- Stipend and tuition fee of the fellow, in line with the host institution's policy. Please account for inflation in the costings in the application form. (Payment of the candidate's stipend and tuition fees must be prioritised over other research expenses if this is not supported using alternative funds.)
- [UK Stroke Forum](#) (UKSF) registration, travel and accommodation fees. We expect all fellows to attend the UKSF each year.
- Dissemination costs: Open Access publishing costs, conference attendance fees.
- Research costs: consumables, travel expenses, [Patient and Public Involvement](#).
- There is no maximum limit for imaging costs. However you will have to justify your request and ensure that costings are in line with institutional and national practices.

Where the study takes places within the NHS, we ask you to outline any associated NHS costs in the supplementary spreadsheet on the budget page and not in the main budget table:

From October 2018 the way we capture different costs associated with clinical studies has changed. We are a partnership funder of the NIHR, who have developed the new process to address the continued frustration about the complexity and variation in processes for commissioners and providers agreeing excess treatment costs (ETCs).

Researchers are required to complete the **Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Tool (SoECAT)** at the point of submission of their application. This is designed to capture the different costs associated with clinical research and attribute them according to whether they are research costs, service support costs, treatment costs, and excess treatment costs/treatment cost savings. The SoECAT will be used by funders and the HRA, and is intended to standardise the way in which the different costs categories will be calculated and attributed.

The impact of this work will:

- Enable the 15 NIHR Local Clinical Research Networks (LCRNs) to help manage the excess treatment costs process on behalf of their local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and in collaboration with NHS England Specialised Commissioning. This single point of access for all proposals for which excess treatment costs may be applicable is designed to make the process much simpler for researchers to navigate.
- Establish a more rapid, standardised and consistent process for the management of excess treatment costs to avoid delays during study set up and to maximise patient recruitment.
- Set a threshold under which excess treatment costs will need to be absorbed by non-primary care providers participating in studies.

Defining ETC values for each study

To underpin the new arrangements, a cost attribution tool has been created in partnership with charity funders and research sponsors. This tool provides a standardised approach for attributing the costs of health and social care research and development (AcoRD) across England. As part of their funding applications, researchers will be required to complete this new tool, known as a Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Tool (SoECAT) for clinical research, which has been developed from the current [HRA Schedule of Events](#). This tool is designed to capture the different costs associated with clinical research and attribute them accordingly.

[The tool can be found here](#).

[Supporting guidance for researchers, study teams and sponsors to complete the SoECAT can be found here.](#)

Non-commercial research sponsors have a responsibility to ensure the study is appropriately costed and attributed

Attribution support is available for investigators, study teams and their R&D offices through AcoRD specialists in the NIHR Local Clinical Research Network. Find out more about how to access this support via the [Study Support Service](#).

Under the new arrangements, sign off via the tool is required to confirm the study attribution complies with the Department of Health and Social Care [AcoRD guidance](#). This early attribution support will underpin the excess treatment cost management process by providing formal sign off, supporting the role of the research sponsor and lead R&D office or Clinical Trial Unit. Completion of the Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Template will be required for studies eligible for the NIHR portfolio and the support this provides, which will include access to excess treatment cost payments under the new arrangements. This ETC value, alongside recruitment activity in the NIHR Central Portfolio Management System, will then be utilised to inform the payments to NHS providers.

A [routemap](#) is available to provide a high level overview for researchers and research sponsors accessing ETCs from 1 October 2018.

Application checklist

- Fellows must have at least two supervisors: one lead supervisor who bears overall responsibility for the training and the research project and a second supervisor who may be less active in supervision and support. Additional supervisors are not mandatory but are permitted.

- You are required to submit your application online, via our award management system, before the deadline (5pm 15 January 2021):
  https://strokeassociation.flexigrant.com

- We will not accept paper/Word/PDF copies of the application form.

- Online signatures: The **Primary Supervisor**, the **Secondary Supervisor**, the **Head of Department** and the **Finance/Research Administration Officer** from the HEI must provide their approval of your application in order to allow you to submit the application. This is done by you inviting them into your application form via the 'Participants' tab in the system and them typing their details into the corresponding declaration page. This acts as their signature. If your application is funded, wet copies of their signatures will be required.

- At the time of application, you do not require approval from the **Research Sponsor**, however if you are successful, wet copies of their signature will be required.
  Awards that we fund require a Research Sponsor if the research is linked to the NHS. To identify who would be suitable to act as the Research Sponsor, we advise you talk to your supervisor(s) and your institution's Research Office. The Research Office will know whether or not you need a sponsor (and are often the sponsor in many cases). For more information about this, please take a look at: http://www.hra.nhs.uk/resources/before-you-apply/roles-and-responsibilties/sponsor/
  It is suggested that the Research Sponsor could be 'the employer of the chief investigator, the educational institution (e.g. for student research), or the care

organisation where the research is to take place'. Please email research@stroke.org.uk if you require further guidance.

- You are not required to have the necessary ethical approval at the time of application. If successful, ethical approval for your study will have to be gained before you can begin your award. You are required to send us a copy of the ethical approval when it is gained.

Adjudication

During the adjudication of Postgraduate Fellowship applications and the selection of fellows, reviewers and panellists will score the application based on:

- The PERSON – the background, career aspirations and potential of the candidate to become a stroke research leader in the future (40%)

- The SUPERVISION that the candidate will receive (15%)

- The INSTITUTION the candidate will be based at (15%)

- The proposed TRAINING programme the candidate would undertake if awarded the Fellowship (15%)

- The PROJECT including: (15%)
  - The purpose of the proposed research project must be directly related to stroke. It must be clear how the research could ultimately be translated into clinical practice and, therefore, provide benefit to stroke patients.

Postgraduate Fellowships are awarded on the recommendation of a panel made up of members of the Stroke Association's Research Awards Pool using the system of expert peer review and a candidate interview.

Postgraduate Fellowships are awarded annually in March, with a closing date in November. Applications are invited by means of advertisements in the medical press and the Stroke Association website (www.stroke.org.uk).

What happens to your application?

Your application will be reviewed by external expert peer reviewers and adjudicated by an adjudication panel made up of members of the Stroke Association's Research Awards Pool.

Peer review scores are used to rank applications and shortlist for interview with agreement from the Chair of the Adjudication Panel. If an application is shortlisted, the proposed candidate is invited to attend an interview. The Research Department will send out invitation letters for interview. Please hold the interview date in your diary from now on until we confirm if you have been shortlisted. You will receive a letter confirming this

approximately two weeks before the interview date. If you have not been shortlisted for interview, you will be informed at the end of January.

The interview usually lasts for around 30 minutes. The candidate will be invited to give a short (8 minute) presentation to the panel outlining their proposed research project, including the research question, a brief background to the research, an outline of the methods and outcome measures, how they propose to analyse the data, and how their research could improve care for patients with stroke. The candidate will then be interviewed by a panel made up of up to four members of the Research Awards Pool and invited experts (if applicable) and members of the Research Team from the Stroke Association. The panel will explore the proposed research project, and will ask questions on any part of the application or detail of the proposed project, and how a Stroke Association Fellowship would help further their career aspirations in stroke. Presentation skills of the applicant will also be assessed.

Following the interview, the panel will discuss the merits of each of the candidates, and will make a recommendation to the Stroke Association Council of Trustees on the applicant(s) who should receive a Fellowship. Successful fellows will be informed in writing. Unsuccessful applicants will also receive a letter containing feedback from their interview and anonymised external peer reviewer comments.

Successful applicants will be required to provide an accurate start date upon accepting the award. We advise candidates to begin the award within 6 months of receiving the offer letter, but the start can be delayed if requested at the discretion of the Stroke Association.