

Eating Disorders and Self-Harm

Funding Opportunity for Mid-Career Researchers

Guidelines for Applicants

Summary

This document guides you through the preparation and submission of an application for the eating disorders and self-harm mid-career researcher fellowship competition.

The application form can be downloaded from: <https://www.medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk/grants/2020-21-edsh-funding-opportunity>

Deadline for Submission is 12:00 Thursday 5 November 2020

Applications must be submitted and approved by all signatories and the application received in its entirety, by this deadline. You will not be able to submit applications after this deadline. We recommend that you submit your application in advance of the deadline so that any technical issues can be resolved in good time.

The Medical Research Foundation is committed to making this application accessible to all by offering assistance where needed. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Research Team if you have any questions or concerns about the application or interview processes: research@medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk Tel: 0207 250 8216.

Overview

The Medical Research Foundation is inviting applications from UK researchers to support research into eating disorders and self-harm. This is part of the Foundation's strategy to invest in research into adolescent mental health and the underlying mechanisms that contribute to it. Evidence shows that 75% of mental health problems emerge before age 18, and 1 in 8 children and adolescents have a mental health disorder. Overall rates of mental health disorder in adolescence and young people are continuing to rise.

The Funder

The Medical Research Foundation is an independent charitable foundation. Formed by the Medical Research Council (MRC) over 90 years ago, we grow and nurture people and ideas wherever we see research opportunities with great potential.

The research supported in this competition is possible thanks to the generous support of Mrs Catherine Mary Evans.

The Funding

There will be up to £1,000,000 available in this competition. Applicants may apply for a fellowship of up to £300,000 to support their research, over a maximum of a 3-year period.

Who can apply

We have identified both eating disorders and self-harm as areas requiring particular research investment, due to their increasing prevalence and current limited understanding of their causes. Following on from our previous 2016 and 2018 funding calls in these areas, the Foundation would now like to support the research leaders of the future in these areas of health, and this fellowship competition is aimed at early to mid-career researchers who are seeking to make a transition to research independence.

The aim of this funding call is to stimulate new high-quality, internationally competitive research to investigate **the aetiology and underlying mechanisms of eating disorders and / or self-harm in children, adolescents, and young adults up to the age of 25.**

All areas of discovery research relevant to self-harm and/or eating disorders will be considered; the applications may be broad in scope or focused on a particular aspect of these complex conditions, for example including data science or social science as well as biological mechanisms of these disorders. We are also interested in non-biological mechanisms where the focus is on interactions between genetics, biological mechanisms, and environmental or social factors, and will consider research projects including interventions if they are exploring underlying mechanisms. The exploitation of samples and data associated with existing cohorts and clinical population groups, and a strong clinical research base is particularly encouraged. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on these disorders is welcomed but not essential, where it reveals insights into causal or mechanistic understanding.

This competition is open to all UK-based researchers at eligible institutions (UK HEIs, Research Council research institutes, hospitals, and other independent research organisations). Applicants must hold a PhD, DPhil or MD and be in the process of, or be ready for, transition to research independence. Applicants will need to demonstrate productivity across past appointments, an upward career trajectory and clear plans to establish their own research niche. The skills needed to win support in this competition are detailed at <https://mrc.ukri.org/skills-careers/skills-needed-to-win-support/>

As this is a fellowship, it is expected that applicants will be seeking their first substantial grant income as a Principal Investigator. It is not intended to support those who have already secured substantial research funds and/or have already established their own research group (e.g. Senior Lecturers, Professors, MRC and other funders' Senior Fellows). Substantial grant income is typically defined as grants or fellowships that are 3 years in duration, with more than £50,000 direct science costs (excluding the principal investigator's salary) per annum.

Applicants who do not meet the eligibility criteria will not have their proposal assessed.

Only one application will be accepted per applicant, though individuals can hold more than one Medical Research Foundation grant at any one time.

In order for applications to be considered for this competition, applicants and research organisations must conform to the eligibility criteria.

<https://www.medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk/what-we-fund/grant-support>

Responsibilities of the Lead Research Organisation and the Principal Investigator

Lead Research Organisation

By submitting an application, a Lead Research Organisation (RO) indicates their formal acceptance of the proposal, approval of the salaries and resources sought and, if the application is successful, acceptance of the terms and conditions of a Medical Research Foundation award.

Administrative authorities have responsibility for ensuring that salaries and resources cited in the proposal are sufficient to undertake the proposed research, attract sufficiently experienced and skilled staff and represent good value-for-money.

Principal Investigator (PI)

The PI is responsible for the intellectual leadership of the research project and for the overall management of the research. They will be the Medical Research Foundation's main contact for the proposal. There

can only be one PI on any proposal.

The PI must be based at the RO at which the award will be administered.

Key dates

- Deadline for submission: 12:00 Thursday 5 November 2020
- Shortlisting notification: February 2021
- Interview: Thursday 18 March 2021
- Funding decision: March 2021
- Feedback on funding decision: March 2021

Application form

Section 1: Applicant details

There can only be one lead applicant. Any researchers who wish to be considered as applicants, in addition to the lead applicant, should be named as co-applicants.

Any other individuals involved in the application can be listed as collaborators unless they will be employed on the grant, in which case they should be named as staff members. Collaborators will need to provide a signed declaration on letter-headed paper confirming that they have consented to co-operate in the research project and explaining the role they will play.

Section 2: Project abstracts

Please adhere to the word limit for each of the sections.

The scientific abstract should be written in a form understandable to an academic audience.

The lay abstract should be written in a form understandable to members of the public (e.g. current or potential supporters) who are not specialists in the field of eating disorders and self-harm research.

Please indicate the key scientific objectives and challenges of the research and any potential medical/clinical implications.

These abstracts will be used for external communications about the award and should therefore not contain specific details of any sensitive information.

Section 3: Case for Support: proposed research project

Provide details of the proposed research project. References, diagrams, tables or charts, and justification of samples sizes (including sample size calculations, where appropriate, or a justification for why these have not been included) can be included within the text or as an appendix. The Case for Support and appendices should not exceed 8 A4 pages PDF format (size 12 Arial font).

The detailed Case for Support for the research project should include the following information:

1. **Background** – provide relevant background information that is needed to understand the wider context of your application. Explain the need for research in this area and the rationale of the lines of research planned. Give sufficient details of other past and current research to show that the aims are scientifically justified and to show that the work will

add distinct value to what is already known, or in progress.

Justify the research either through its importance for human health, or its contribution to relevant areas of basic biomedical science.

2. **Hypothesis and objectives** – describe the main hypotheses to be investigated, details of the objectives and how they will be achieved.
3. **Study design** – describe the experimental approaches and methodology for the research in detail (for example giving and explaining sample sizes, methods of recruitment and trial designs). It is not necessary to describe each experiment, but sufficient detail is required to show why the research is likely to be competitive.
4. **Timelines and milestones** – give timelines for the research with major milestones and deliverables.
5. **Potential problems and contingency plans** – highlight any potential risks and identify procedures that can be put in place to deal with them.
6. **People** – outline how each of the investigators named in the proposal would work together and outline other major collaborations important for the research. Explain how the award will contribute to the career development of the applicant (mid-career researcher). Detail productivity from previous appointments/research funding and demonstrate how the award will promote the applicant's trajectory towards research independence.
7. **Environment** – describe how the scientific or clinical environment(s) in which the research will be conducted will promote the delivery of the proposed research. Explain how the research will benefit from facilities provided by the Research Organisation. Describe any clinical, commercial, or organisational dependencies necessary to support the research, or to help translate it into practice.
8. **Ethics & Research Governance** - describe the ethical issues arising from any involvement of people, human samples or personal data in the research proposal. Give details of how any specific risks to human participants will be controlled, and of any new animal research the funding would be supporting. Describe the ethical review and research governance arrangements that would apply to the proposed research.
9. **Exploitation and Dissemination** – describe plans to disseminate the findings of the research. Is the proposed research likely to generate commercially exploitable results? Other than publication in peer reviewed journals, indicate how any results arising from the research will be disseminated to promote or facilitate take-up by users in the health services.

The Medical Research Foundation expects that before work commences on any research, the Principal Investigator will have ensured in collaboration with the lead research organisation that all appropriate regulatory approvals are in place. These could include those relating to human participation, radiation, genetic manipulation, animals, stem cells, personal safety and health and safety.

The Medical Research Foundation expects that research involving animals will comply with [UK regulations](#) and the research is planned and conducted according to the [3Rs](#).

If the project involves the use of animals, please provide confirmation of personal licences for all members of staff involved in the proposed animal research. In addition, please confirm the relevant project licence

covers the proposed work.

Section 4: Financial Schedule

The Medical Research Foundation will meet the full direct costs of research. Direct costs are those that will arise from the conduct of the research project and can be charged as the cash value spent and can be supported by an auditable record. Like all medical research charities, the Medical Research Foundation does not meet the indirect costs of research.

Applications should be costed at today's prices and inflation should not be included.

Applications can include requests for the costs of:

- Research staff (who will directly support the research proposal) including annual pay-scale increments but excluding predicted annual pay awards and overheads *i.e.* the apprenticeship levy
- Research consumables and minor equipment
- Access charges for specialist equipment or services
- Travel costs of the PI or members of staff travelling between multi-centre research sites or for scheduled collaborator meetings relating to the project.
- Animals and animal husbandry
- Conference travel and subsistence
- Open access publishing costs (up to £6,000 for grant durations of a three-year minimum)
- Research equipment
- Any other direct costs of the proposed research

Medical Research Foundation research grants will not fund:

- Any directly allocated costs *i.e.* estate costs and costs of shared resources such as staff and equipment.
- Any indirect costs necessary for underpinning research but which cannot be allocated to individual projects (including but not limited to bench fees, computing and information support, general maintenance and other infrastructure costs, HR and recruitment costs etc.)
- Patient care, NHS treatment or NHS support costs associated with clinical research, which are met through other sources of funding.
- Cost of public engagement in science work
- Other costs associated with dissemination of research findings.

Justify the budget requested and provide details of any costs to be met through other funding sources.

Section 5: Recommended and Excluded Reviewers

Please suggest up to three experts to review the application. These individuals should **not** be: i) closely associated with the proposed project or any related work; ii) collaborators/co-applicants on any active or recent grants; iii) have published with the lead applicant in the past five years; or, iv) previous mentors/supervisors of the lead applicant. We cannot guarantee that we will approach these experts for an assessment of the applications.

Please provide the names of up to three reviewers that you do not wish to review the application due to potential conflicts of interest.

Section 6: Applicant CV

Please include with the application a two-page academic CV for each of the applicants and co-applicants. Applicants may find the following UKRI fellowship [CV template](#) of use as guidance.

Section 7: Authorisation and Declarations

Please provide the details of the person at the lead Research Organisation responsible for the administration of funds. Should you be successful and win grant support, we will need to know who to contact about the financial arrangements and other contractual agreements.

Please provide the details of the Head of Department of the Lead applicant.

All declarations should be signed by the appropriate persons prior to the submission of the application.

Application check list

Please ensure that you have all the following documentations before submitting your application:

- Completed Eating Disorders and Self Harm Funding Competition application form
- Case for Support (section 3)
- Two-page CV for lead and co-applicants
- Any other relevant documentations (i.e. Collaborator letters)

Please clearly label all attached files and ensure that all relevant documents are suitable and present.

If you have any questions about any aspects of the application process, please contact a member of the Medical Research Foundation's team: research@medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk Tel: 0207 250 8216.

Applications must be submitted electronically to research@medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk prior to the closing date. We will acknowledge receipt of your application within two days of the submission deadline.

Appendices

Scoring Matrix for Reviewers

Score Indicators	Score
Exceptional – Top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scientific Quality and Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance to the UK – Original and innovative; novel methodology and design – Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact ■ Scientific Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Excellent potential for research leadership (track record, team, environment, and collaborators) ■ Justification of Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Potential for high return on investment (resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation) – Appropriate staff time allocated to deliver project (Principal investigators and co-investigators) ■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are fully considered 	6
Excellent – Internationally competitive and leading edge nationally, or of national strategic importance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scientific Quality and Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance to the UK – Original and innovative; novel methodology and design – Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact ■ Scientific Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Excellent potential for research leadership (track record, team, environment, and collaborators) ■ Justification of Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Potential for high return on investment (resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation) – Appropriate staff time allocated to deliver project (Principal investigators and co-investigators) ■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are fully considered 	5
Very High Quality – Internationally competitive in parts	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scientific Quality and Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance to the UK – Robust methodology and design (innovative in parts) – Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact ■ Scientific Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Excellent potential for research leadership (track record, team, environment, and collaborators) ■ Justification of Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Potential for significant return on investment (resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation) 	4

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Appropriate staff time allocated to deliver project (Principal investigators and co-investigators) ■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are fully considered 	
High Quality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scientific Quality and Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Worthwhile scientific question or knowledge gap or a valuable scientific resource – Methodologically sound study – Potential for significant health and/or socioeconomic impact ■ Scientific Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strong potential for research leadership (track record, team, environment, and collaborators) ■ Justification of Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Potential for significant return on investment (resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation) – Appropriate staff time allocated to deliver project (may be scope strengthen management of the project) ■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are well considered 	3
Good Quality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scientific Quality and Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Worthwhile scientific question or knowledge gap or a valuable scientific resource – Methodologically sound study but areas require revision – Likelihood of successful delivery ■ Scientific Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strong potential for research leadership (track record, team, environment, and collaborators) ■ Justification of Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Potentially more limited return on investment (resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation) – Resources broadly appropriate to deliver the proposal ■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are adequately considered 	2
Poor Quality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scientific Quality and Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Poorly defined question – Methodologically weak study – Limited likelihood of new knowledge generation ■ Scientific Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Poor research leadership potential ■ Justification of Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Potentially poor return on investment ■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are not adequately considered 	1
Ineligible for funding	
	0

Scoring Matrix for Expert Review Panel

Score Indicators	Fundable
10. Exceptional – Top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Highly original and innovative – Novel methodology and design – Excellent potential for research leadership (track record, team, environment, and collaborators are amongst the best in a broad field) ■ Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap – Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact – Internationally unique resource of value to many disciplines ■ Productivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Potential for high return on investment – Very high likelihood of successful delivery (risks well managed) 	Fundable
9. Excellent – Internationally competitive and leading edge in most areas	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Original and innovative – Novel methodology and design – Excellent potential for research leadership (track record, team, environment, and collaborators e.g. among the best in a specialist area) ■ Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap – Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact – Internationally significant resource of value to many disciplines ■ Productivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Potential for high return on investment – Very high likelihood of successful delivery (risks well managed) 	Fundable
8. Very High Quality – Internationally competitive and leading edge nationally	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Original and innovative – Robust methodology and design (innovative in parts) – Excellent potential for research leadership (track record, team, environment, and collaborators) ■ Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance to the UK – Potential for high health and /or socioeconomic impact – Resource of value to many disciplines ■ Productivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Potential for significant return on investment – Very high likelihood of successful delivery (risks well-managed) 	Fundable
7. High Quality – Leading edge nationally and internationally competitive in parts	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quality 	Fundable

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Innovative – Robust methodology and design (innovative in parts) – Strong potential for research leadership (track record, team, environment, and collaborators) ■ Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Key scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance to the UK – Potential for significant health and/or socioeconomic impact – Valuable scientific resource ■ Justification of Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Potential for significant return on investment – High likelihood of successful delivery 	
6. High Quality – Leading edge nationally, but not yet internationally competitive	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Methodologically robust study – Potential for research leadership (track record, team, environment, and collaborators) ■ Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Worthwhile scientific question or knowledge gap – Justifiable scientific resource – Potential for reasonable health and/or socioeconomic impact ■ Productivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Resources appropriate to deliver the proposal – High likelihood of successful delivery 	Fundable
5. Good Quality – Nationally competitive	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Methodologically sound study but areas require significant revision – Leadership potential not optimal (track record, scope to strengthen team and/or collaborators; environment) – Poorly defined question ■ Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Worthwhile scientific question with potentially useful outcomes – Moderate likelihood of contributing to new knowledge generation ■ Productivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Resources broadly appropriate to deliver the proposal – Good likelihood of successful delivery 	Not fundable
4. Potentially Useful – With significant weaknesses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Methodologically sound study (approach or study design requires significant revision) – Leadership potential (track record)/environment not optimal ■ Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Contains potentially useful ideas but requires major revision – Moderate likelihood of successful delivery ■ Productivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Resources inappropriate to deliver the proposal <p>Unlikely to significantly contribute to new knowledge generation</p>	Not fundable
3. Potentially Useful – With major weaknesses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Question poorly defined 	Not fundable

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Methodologically weak study – Poor leadership potential/environment ■ Productivity – Unlikely to contribute to new knowledge generation 	
2. Poor quality science, bordering on unacceptable	Not fundable
1. Unacceptable quality or has serious ethical concerns	Not fundable
0. Ineligible for funding	Not fundable