

Child and Adolescent Eye Health: Research Grants

Guidance for Peer Review

Overview

This document guides you through the Medical Research Foundation's peer review process for this competition. If you have any question or concerns regarding the peer review process please contact the Research Team, at research@medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk or 0207 395 2314.

Please submit your peer review assessment via medicalresearchfoundation.flexigrant.com

Background to the Funder

The Medical Research Foundation is an independent charitable foundation. Formed by the Medical Research Council (MRC) over 100 years ago, we grow and nurture people and ideas wherever we see research opportunities with great potential.

The research we fund is only possible thanks to the incredible generosity of our donors. This competition has been made possible by donations from the estates of Barbara Sofia Forni, Anne Catherine Burdon, Caroline Louise Stacey Pike, and Herman Spooner.

Moorfields Eye Charity is the main fundraising and grant making organisation for Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and its academic partner the UCL Institute of Ophthalmology. It's support enables Moorfields and UCL to provide world-leading eye care, research and education from the Oriel centre benefiting patients across the UK and globally.

Importance of Peer Review

Peer review ensures proposals for research funding are scrutinised by independent scientific experts who specialise in the areas of science covered in the proposal to assess, for example, the viability, quality, cost-effectiveness and impact of the science concerned.

External peer reviewers are experts in the field of research proposed in the application.

Expert review panels assess proposals, drawing on the external peer reviewers' comments and scores to make funding decisions. Panel members are high calibre, committed senior scientists at professor level or equivalent, based in a leading UK or world-renowned research institute, university or biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry, who have broad experience of cutting edge research.

The objectives of peer review are to:

- identify the best research addressing the most important and urgent questions,
- obtain value-for-money and ensure effective and efficient use of resources,
- identify the best scientists with the highest potential, working in the best environments.

There is an implicit contract between the applicant, the Medical Research Foundation and the reviewer. Effective review requires the commitment of all three. The Foundation outlines clear aims and assessment criteria for each of its schemes and calls. Proposals should fall within the criteria and explain clearly and comprehensively how they meet it.

Competition Background

The Medical Research Foundation and Moorfields Eye Charity are inviting applications from researchers who are seeking to progress the field of Child and Adolescent Eye Health. The collaborative research grants

aim to support research that will increase understanding of the mechanisms underpinning the full spectrum of eye health and disease in children and adolescents, including new methodologies, new or improved diagnosis, and treatments and cures.

Childhood and adolescent eye diseases and visual loss are associated with reduced wellbeing, increased need for educational support and ongoing eye problems into adulthood and later life. Investments have been made in adult eye conditions resulting in significant improvements in diagnostics and treatment options but research into child and adolescent eye disease remains an area of important investment. This funding call aims to support new research and research collaborations in this area, with the aim of bringing new research approaches to the field.

- Applications are welcomed from researchers at all levels of seniority. We would particularly welcome collaborative grants led by the full spectrum of researchers working in the field, to allow multi-disciplinary and multi-professional projects. Expertise should be drawn from different research areas and professionals, allowing for collaboration between basic scientists, clinicians, optometrists, orthoptists and other allied health professionals.
- These grants cannot be used to fund PhD Studentships.
- The remit of the call will be the full spectrum of eye diseases and conditions usually seen in children or adolescents. Applications will be encouraged in common causes of vision loss to address areas where there is a large impact on people's quality of life, but little progress has been made. Applications are not encouraged with a sole focus to conduct a genetics or genomics study, however, projects where genetic or genomic studies are carried out by collaborators or form part of the proposal, rather than the main focus, will be considered within scope.

Funding Available

Applicants may apply for up to £300,000 to support their research, over a maximum of a 3-year period. There will be at least £1,700,000 available across this competition.

Integrity of Reviews: Declarations of Interest

Integrity between the applicant and reviewer is essential as is the relationship between the Medical Research Foundation, applicant and reviewer. Reviewers are asked to identify any possible **conflicts of interest** before they begin reviewing an application and to decline to review the application and state the reason why so this can be recorded.

Confidentiality

The proposal and any associated papers have been forwarded 'in confidence'. When undertaking to review a proposal, a reviewer commits to keeping all information confidential and never to use, retain or copy the information in the proposal. Reviewers must not make use of the research designs or research findings from a proposal under review and should not allow others to do so.

Reviewers accept and acknowledge that any comments submitted to the Medical Research Foundation may be provided to the applicant, on a confidential basis and in anonymised form, to allow an applicant to respond to issues raised as part of the peer review process and to benefit future proposals. Reviews cannot be anonymised prior to being shared with the Panel, however, comments will be treated with confidentiality. Reviewers should be careful not to include information in their review which compromises their anonymity. Applicants and Panel members are also required to maintain a similar duty of confidence as it is recognised that reviewers may, from time to time refer to ongoing research, either their own or other researchers for the purposes of comparison.

Reviewer Assessment: Evaluation Criteria

The proposal should be considered against the following four core criteria:

1. **Importance:** How important are the questions, or gaps in knowledge, that are being addressed?
2. **Scientific potential:** What are the prospects for good scientific progress?
3. **Leadership:** Do the applicants demonstrate strong leadership, within their own environment and within the field more broadly?
4. **Resources requested:** Are the funds requested essential for the work, and do the importance and scientific potential justify funding on the scale requested?

Reviewers should also identify any ethical issues or risks to human participants that need further attention.


Please note: The Medical Research Foundation is trialling the use of the Résumé for Researchers as an alternative to the traditional CV format. The Résumé for Researchers was originally developed by The Royal Society as a tool to more broadly evaluate researchers, particularly at the early career stages. The template has been adopted and adapted by the Medical Research Foundation as it supports the Foundation's approach of considering a wider view of contribution to the research landscape, at all career stages, not based solely on publication record.

Reviewers should consider the details provided by the applicant contained within the Résumé for Researchers when evaluating criteria such as the applicant's scientific impact, collaborative and leadership qualities.

Online Review Process

Peer review will be completed through our online grant management system, Flexi-Grant. You will receive a link to this via email. Once you have clicked the link, you will be prompted to create an account should you not already have one. You will then be directed to the online review form and the application.

To access to the full application, please ensure that you have selected 'Accept review' as shown below.



The screenshot shows a review form interface. At the top, it says "Project synopsis". Below that, it lists "Primary Applicant" as "Demonstration Admin (D.A.S Kenya)". Underneath, it says "Example project" followed by a block of placeholder text: "Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Curabitur lorem massa, blandit a augue non, bibendum ultricies dolor. Vestibulum dictum odio luctus, finibus tellus eu, scelerisque ligula. Aenean dictum ligula sed erat pulvinar blandit. Vivamus euismod dui tempus ultrices facilisis. Donec malesuada blandit enim, id maximus diam euismod vitae. Fusce hendrerit tempus luctus. Suspendisse placerat turpis quis enim pharetra euismod." At the bottom right of the form, there are two buttons: "Decline review" (in red) and "Accept review" (in black).

Reviewers are asked to complete a reviewer assessment form in Flexi-Grant using the headings below. The questions under each heading are provided as a guide and it is not necessary to answer each one.

Summary of assessment

- Overall, what is the quality of the proposal?
- How significant is the proposed study in terms of its potential impact?
- To what extent will the proposed study extend the base of knowledge?

Detailed assessment of proposed programme and applicant

- Is the proposal realistic in its timeframes and resources?
- How convincing and coherent is the overall proposed approach? Is the methodology appropriate?
- How original or innovative are the proposals?
- Has the work already been done or is it being done elsewhere?
- How good is the prospect for significant scientific advance?

Applicants' contribution to knowledge generation (publication record and wider contribution to research field)

- Does the applicant have the expertise and skill-set to carry out the proposed study?
- Is the applicant's track record and achievements to date good?
- What is the applicant's current research standing?
- Is the applicant's proposed time commitment to the work appropriate and sufficient?
- Where there is a request to fund personal salaries are the requests in each case reasonable?

Applicants' contribution to the training and development of individuals

Has the applicant contributed to the development of others?

Applicants' contribution to the wider research community

Has the applicant contributed to the wider research community and culture?

Applicants' contribution to broader society

Has the applicant made a wide contribution to the research field, outside of their publication record?

Research environment and collaborators

- Is the proposed environment(s) suitable and does it have the variety of expertise and disciplines to support the research?
- Have the host institutions demonstrated a clear commitment to the proposed research for the duration of the grant?
- Are any collaborators well chosen?
- Does the environment provide appropriate opportunities for career development of personnel supported on the grant?
- Are there any dependencies on other organisations or funding of which Medical Research Foundation should be made aware?

Value for money

- Does the study represent good value for money in respect of the resources being requested from the Medical Research Foundation?
- Are the proposed resources fully justified in terms of the proposed science?
- Will the expected benefits of the research justify its cost to the Medical Research Foundation?

Ethics and other implications

- Is the work ethically acceptable?
- Are there any ethical issues that need separate consideration?
- Where applicable, is the use of animals appropriate and in line with the Medical Research Foundation guidelines?
- Are the ethical review and research governance arrangements clear and acceptable?
- Where applicable, is the use of human participants or human tissue appropriate and in line with the Medical Research Foundation guidelines?
- Are there any other implications which could put the Medical Research Foundation, participants in the research, or the applicant at risk?
- Are there any risks that the Medical Research Foundation should be taking into account when deciding whether to fund this research?

Reviewer Assessment: Scoring

Please score the proposal between 0 and 6, using whole numbers only. Please see the summary table below and use detailed descriptions of the scores in Annex 1 to allocate a numerical score to the application. Reviewers should ensure their comments justify the score awarded. Scores will be taken into consideration during the Expert Review Panel meeting

6	Exceptional. Top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance
5	Excellent. Internationally competitive and leading edge nationally, or of national strategic importance
4	Very High Quality. Internationally competitive in parts
3	High Quality
2	Good Quality
1	Poor Quality
0	Ineligible for funding

Annex 1: Scoring Range 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 – Highly original and innovative research questions – Novel methodology and design – Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact – Outputs will be internationally unique and of value across the child and adolescent eye health research field – Very high likelihood of successful delivery ■ Scientific Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Outstanding leadership, with evidence of supporting and developing junior researchers (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 research questions – Includes novel methodology and design – Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact – Outputs will be internationally significant and of value across the child and adolescent eye health research field – Very high likelihood of successful delivery ■ Scientific Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Excellent research leadership with evidence of supporting and developing junior researchers (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"> – Very important scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance to the UK – Original and innovative research questions – Robust methodology and design (innovative in parts) – Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact – Outputs will be internationally significant in part (leading edge nationally) and of value across the child and adolescent eye health research field – Very high likelihood of successful delivery ■ Scientific Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Excellent 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 (Principal investigators and co-investigators) ■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are fully considered 	4
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 – Interesting research questions in part – Methodologically sound study – Potential for reasonable health and/or socioeconomic impact – Outputs of reasonable value to the child and adolescent eye health research field – High likelihood of successful delivery ■ Scientific Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strong 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 (Principal investigators and co-investigators) ■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are well considered (may be scope to strengthen management of the project) 	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 – Limited research questions – Methodologically sound study but areas require revision – Potentially valuable outputs to the child and adolescent eye health research field – Reasonable likelihood of successful delivery ■ Scientific Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Appropriate research leadership, with limited evidence of supporting and developing junior researchers (scope to strengthen 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, no evidence of supporting and developing junior researchers ■ 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	