

Launchpad Award in Hearing: Research Grants

Guidance for Panel 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](http://www.medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk) is an independent charitable foundation. Formed by the Medical Research Council (MRC), we grow and nurture people and ideas wherever we see research opportunities with great potential. The Medical Research Foundation (and its predecessor charities) have been funding research for over 100 years.

This funding call was possible thanks to the generous support of the late Mrs Esme Dorothea Gray.

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.

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 has invited applications from researchers at all career stages in the broad field of hearing research to support work which enhances, or complements research being carried out at the department of Hearing Sciences at the University of Nottingham.

Research areas could include, but are not limited to:

- further understanding of the of the auditory system
- mechanisms underpinning hearing loss, tinnitus, or other auditory disorders
- the advancement or development of measurements, predictors, or outcomes for any type of hearing problem
- the advancement or development of treatment intervention approaches for any type of hearing problem
- understanding and reducing the impact of any type of hearing problem on health and well-being

Applications can be made to support an early career researcher in their first research position, a mid-career researcher to make the transition towards independence, or an established researcher to carry out a pilot study. Applications should be assessed relative to the career stage of the applicant. Applications should

enhance the researcher's progression to their next career stage.

Funding Available

Applicants may apply for up to £100,000 to support their research, over a maximum of an 18-month period.

Who can apply

This scheme was open to both UK-based and international researchers at eligible institutions (HEIs, Research Council research institutes, hospitals, and other independent research organisations). Applications from researchers outside of the University of Nottingham will be assessed equally to those currently based at the University of Nottingham, no preference will be given to either. However, **researchers must be based at the University of Nottingham Hearing Sciences for the duration of the award** and therefore if they are not currently based there would be expected to move.

Applicants must hold a PhD, DPhil or MD. PhD students who had not yet submitted their thesis but intend to do so by the end of October 2023 were also eligible to apply.

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 shared '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. Reviewers should be careful not to include information in their review which compromises their anonymity. Due to the constraints of the online grants management system, reviewers identities will be visible to other Expert Review Panel members.

Applicants 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 that of 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. **Career development:** To what extent will the proposal contribute towards the career progression of the applicant?
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. Applicants should be assessed in line with the expectations for their career stage.

Please note: The Medical Research Foundation is using 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.

Project synopsis

Primary Applicant
Demonstration Admin (D.A.S Kenya)

Example project

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.

Decline review Accept review

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?

Detail assessment of proposed programme

- 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?
- Is the proposal likely to provide the basis for strong future research?
- Has the gender dimension of the experimental design been appropriately considered?

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 records and achievements to date good?
- Has the applicant made a wide contribution to the research field, outside of their publication record?
- Is the 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 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 contributed to society more broadly, through societal engagement and knowledge exchange?

Research environment and collaborators

- Is the proposed environment(s) suitable and does it have the variety of expertise and disciplines to support the research?
- Has the host institution 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?

External communications and commercial exploitation

- Are the proposed arrangements for the public understanding of this work appropriate and sufficient?
- Are the proposed plans for disseminating the results of the research appropriate and adequate?
- Are the proposed arrangements for the commercial development of any intellectual property arising from the research appropriate and adequate?

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 proposal , 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 international strategic importance – Original and innovative; novel methodology and design – Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact ■ Scientific career progression/environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Outstanding career progression and potential (broad contribution to knowledge generation, engagement with wider research community, development of individuals) – Excellent research environment (team, facilities, 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 career progression and potential (broad contribution to knowledge generation, engagement with wider research community, development of individuals) – Excellent research environment (team, facilities, 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"> – Very good Outstanding career progression and potential (broad contribution to knowledge generation, engagement with wider research community, development of individuals) – Very good research environment (team, facilities, 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"> – Good career progression and potential (good contribution to knowledge generation, engagement with wider research community, development of individuals) – Good research environment (team, facilities, collaborators) ■ Justification of Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Potential for good-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 appropriately 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"> – Appropriate career progression and potential (scope to strengthen contribution to knowledge generation, engagement with wider research community, development of individuals) – Appropriate research environment (scope to strengthen team, facilities, 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 progression and potential – Peer research environment ■ 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

