

Mental Health

Launchpad Grant

Guidance for 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 **020 4581 2402**.

Please submit your peer review assessment via <https://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 generosity of our donors. This competition is supported by a donation from the estate of the late Mrs Catherine Mary Evans, and numerous other donors.

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 mid-career researchers in the field of mental health. These grants provide funding to support research that will increase understanding of mental health, and improve diagnosis, treatment and recovery, acting as a launchpad for further research suitable for larger funding opportunities.

Proposals are particularly encouraged from those looking to develop multidisciplinary partnerships with researchers in other fields, expanding the applicant's research networks and building their research profile.

Applications within a broad field of mental health research are welcomed. However, we particularly encouraged applications from neglected areas of mental health, including:

- suicide and self-harm
- trauma related mental health

- borderline personality disorder
- OCD
- neurodevelopmental disorders are considered within the scope of this competition, and we particularly encourage applications from researchers working in ADHD and Tourette's

Applicants to the Launchpad Grants in Mental Health can use the funding to conduct pilot studies, generate data and collaborations, and develop competitive research proposals for larger funding. The research should have a UK focus; prior work leading to the application does not need to be solely UK-based, but the applicant should make clear the relevance of the proposed research for mental health in the UK.

Funding Available

Applicants may apply for up to £100,000 to support their research, over a maximum of a 2-year period (pro rata for part-time positions). There will be up to £500,000 available in this competition.

Who can apply?

This competition was open to all UK-based researchers and clinical academics at eligible institutions (UK HEIs, Research Council research institutes, hospitals, and other independent research organisations). Applicants must hold a PhD, DPhil, MD or doctorate in a relevant area and be conducting their research at an eligible institution. Partnerships outside of academia were allowed, providing the collaboration will advance the research project in line with the aims of the funding call. Clinical academics and applicants with clinical duties were encouraged to apply.

This competition is for mid-career researchers. Mid-career researchers are those with extensive postdoctoral experience and in the process of, or ready for, transition to research independence.

Integrity of Panel Members: Declarations of Interest

Integrity between the Medical Research Foundation, applicant and reviewer is essential. Panel members are asked to identify any possible **conflicts of interest** before they begin reviewing an application and to discuss with the Foundation their potential conflicts.

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 but not to applicants.

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 evaluate researchers more broadly, 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

For written review:

Reviews 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 assigned and 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

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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?
- 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?

Applicants' track record and 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?
- Are 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?
- Has the applicant contributed to the development of others?
- Has the applicant contributed to the wider research community and culture?
- 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?

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

Invitation to rebuttal

Following review, applicants will either be invited to submit a rebuttal to the reviewers' comments, or their application will be declined. Please indicate whether the applicant should be invited to submit a rebuttal based on the following considerations:

- Is the application of sufficient quality to be supported, or could it be with minor revision or justification?
- Could any concerns raised during the review process be addressed adequately in a rebuttal?

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 Review Panel meeting.

After reviewing and scoring the application, please indicate whether the applicant should be invited to provide a rebuttal to be assessed by the Review Panel. Inviting the applicant to provide a rebuttal means they will be shortlisted. Those not invited to provide a rebuttal will be declined at this stage.

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

Scoring Range for Panel Review

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 highly innovative collaborative activities; novel methodology and design – High potential for future research with substantial health and/or socioeconomic impact ■ Scientific career progression/environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Outstanding career progression and potential, skills appropriate for the proposed research – Outstanding career development potential actively supported by the proposed activities – 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 career progression/environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Excellent career progression and potential, skills appropriate for the proposed research – Excellent career development potential actively supported by the proposed activities – 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 	4

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Scientific career progression/environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Very good career progression and potential, skills appropriate for the proposed research – Good career development potential actively supported by the proposed activities – 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) – 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 – Methodologically sound study – Potential for significant health and/or socioeconomic impact ■ Scientific career progression/environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Good career progression and potential, skills appropriate for the proposed research – Reasonable career development potential actively supported by the proposed activities – 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 career progression/environment <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) – Poor career development potential, not actively supported by the proposed activities – 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 career progression/environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Poor research progression and potential – Poor career development potential – Poor research environment ■ Justification of Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Potentially poor return on investment, inappropriate use of resources ■ Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are not adequately considered 	1
Ineligible for funding	0