MS Society PhD Fellowship Awards

Applicant guidance

You should use this guidance document with the 'help' sections on our online application system CC Grant Tracker.

March 2023

Let's stop MS **together**

Contents

1.   Introduction

We're the largest charitable funder of MS research in the UK. We welcome applications for projects that will increase understanding of the cause and find new effective treatments or prevention strategies for MS. And projects improving care and services for people affected by MS too.

We don't make any decisions on the scientific quality and relevance of applications. These are made by independent peer and lay reviewers. As members of the Association of Medical Research Charities we adhere to the Principles of Peer Review.

You can read more about our approach to reviewing applications and The Expert Review Network on our website.

You should use this guidance document with the "Help" sections in the application forms on our online application system CC Grant Tracker.

We try to make sure that the information in this guidance is accurate. But changes are possible and the most up-to-date guidance is available on our website.

If you have any questions, please email us at research@mssociety.org.uk or call us on 020 8438 0822.

2.   PhD Fellowship Awards Purpose and Scope

PhD Fellowship Awards are one of our Career Development Awards. They are designed to encourage the best graduates to embark on a research career in MS. These awards provide practical research training leading to a doctorate, under the supervision of an experienced researcher.

Support is provided over a 3-year period. PhD Fellowship Awards are typically around £100,000. We'll fund PhD stipends in accordance with MRC guidelines, up to £7,000 per year towards tuition fees and a maximum of £15,000 per year in running costs. We'll also fund up to £3,000 in conference costs.

2.1   Our Research and Organisational Strategies

Your application should fit with our 2018-2022 Research Strategy and 2023-2024 Research Strategy Extension. And you must explain how the project helps us to achieve these aims. We also have an organisational strategy to guide our work from 2020-2024.

You should read and strongly consider these documents when writing your application.

2.2   James Lind Alliance Partnership (JLA) research priorities

In 2013 we completed a James Lind Alliance Partnership (JLA) to identify research priorities that are important to people affected by MS and healthcare professionals.

We don't exclusively restrict our funding to these priorities. We continue to support research into the causes of MS, and all aspects of treatment and care for people affected by MS. However, we do favour applications that specifically address these priorities. You will need to outline which, if any, of the JLA priorities your application addresses.

2.3   Award Terms and Conditions

You should also read our Award Terms and Conditions. This document contains our:
- **Open Access Policy**: We're committed to open and unrestricted access to the results of our funded research. We require any research papers based on our funded research to be published in an open access environment.

- **Grant Award Conditions**: The Award Conditions, together with the Award Letter and the Policies, set out the terms and conditions on which we make Awards.
- **Intellectual Property Policy**: This Intellectual Property (IP) Policy document sets out principles that we're guided by when considering questions relating to intellectual property and research matters.

3.   Key Terms and Definitions

Term	Definition
Lead Applicant/ Supervisor	The named lead applicant is considered to be the project leader. For PhD Fellowships, the lead applicant is considered the main supervisor for the PhD Fellow. In addition, the lead applicant will: - Be the contact person for all correspondence relating to the application. - Must accept overall responsibility for the award, if granted, and must be actively engaged in its direction.
Adviser	- You can add Advisers to your application. They can view and edit the application, and provide comments. - Advisers don't need to be actively involved in the project. - Advisers' CVs will be included in the application PDF and seen by reviewers. - They don't need to sign off the application before it's submitted.
Co-applicant	- A co-applicant is a researcher who'll be actively involved in the project should the funding application be successful. - Co-applicants can view and edit applications. - Co-applicants have to approve applications before they can be submitted.
Finance Officer	- A member of the host institution who is responsible for confirming and approving financial details of applications, acting as **FINAL SIGNATORY** for application submission. - They will be responsible for administering the grant if it is awarded.
Public Engagement	Where information and knowledge about research is provided and disseminated. Examples of engagement are: - science festivals open to the public - open days at a research centre - raising awareness in the media To find out more about engagement, see http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/
Public Involvement (PPI)	Where members of the public are actively involved in research projects and in research organisations. Examples of involvement include when people affected by MS: - are involved in identifying research priorities - are members of a project steering group - comment on patient information materials To find out more about involvement, see www.invo.org.uk

Public Participation	Where people take part in a research study. Examples of participation include people being recruited to a clinical trial or other study, or completing a questionnaire as part of a study. To find out more about participation in trials, see https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/clinical-trials/
Research Network	The Research Network are a passionate group of individuals living with MS or caring for someone with MS. They're not required to have specialist scientific knowledge, but are trained to use their personal experiences of MS to review applications, ensuring that the research we fund is of the highest importance to people with MS.

4. Submitting your application

Your application must be submitted through CC Grant Tracker. You can find guidance for how to use Grant Tracker on our website. You must complete all sections of the application form.

4.1 Who's eligible to apply?

PhD Fellowships are awarded to the prospective supervisor of the project (Lead Applicant). You're responsible for identifying a suitable student. You don't need to name them when making your application. Students must have a minimum of upper second class honours degree, or equivalent, before starting the project.

You're expected to have a contract (fixed-term or tenure) which covers the proposed duration of the grant. You must be based at an UK university or NHS institution and be the Principal Investigator of the project.

The Lead Applicant can invite Co-Applicants and Advisers to join the application as Participants. For all applications the Lead Applicant **must** invite a Finance Officer who approves the application from the host institution and acts as the Final Signatory for application submission.

4.2 Patient and public involvement (PPI)

Patient and public involvement (PPI) in research is when people with personal experience of health conditions work in active partnership with researchers or research funders like us.

Involvement isn't the same as recruiting participants to your study or sharing information with people through public engagement events. Involvement is about working in partnership with people affected by MS to shape, design and oversee a project.

1. In your application you need to describe: How people affected by MS have been involved in the development of your proposal (pre-application involvement)
2. How you plan to involve people affected in your ongoing study, if funded.

Pre-application involvement

Before applying, we encourage you to involve people affected by MS in the development of your proposal. This helps to ensure:

– your research questions are relevant to their experiences
– you can demonstrate the relevance of your work to people affected by MS
– your study design considers the needs of people affected by MS

Involvement in your ongoing study

As well as working with people to develop your application, you should also plan for how you will continue to involve people affected by MS throughout the project. For example, people affected by MS could:

- Join an advisory group to provide their perspective throughout the course of a project - advising on challenges as they arise
- Review participant information materials such as leaflets, posters, webpages, questionnaires (for clinical projects)
- Advise on the best ways to communicate and disseminate your findings

Budgeting for involvement

Involving people in research requires time and money. It's important to account for the costs of involvement as without them, you'll struggle to involve people effectively.

You should include the costs for any planned PPI activities in your application. For example, you should consider:

1. Expenses

   You must cover any expenses that people will incur by getting involved in PPI activities. People should never be out-of-pocket. This may include, for example, travel, subsistence and carer costs for face-to-face meetings, broadband and childcare costs for online meetings.

2. Training and support

   Training and induction sessions may be required so that people affected by MS are supported to carry out their role well. There are many free resources available online, but you should consider whether any paid training is required. You may also wish for Research Network members to join you at conferences and events.

3. Payment

   It is best practice to offer payment for members of the public who get involved in your work, in recognition of their time, skills and expertise. How much to budget will depend on a number of factors, for example how often they are going to be involved and what level of responsibility they will have.

   We recommend you read and work through the NIHR's payment guidance for researchers. This includes information on budgeting and example payment rates for different activities.

We can support you to plan and budget for your public involvement, connect with people affected by MS and carry out activities. Get in touch with us at researchnetwork@mssociety.org.uk

You should consider the following resources to plan effective involvement:
- [NIHR – guide to public involvement in funding applications](#)
- [NIHR INVOLVE – payment and recognition for public involvement](#)
- [A practical guide to patient and public involvement in lab-based research](#)

4.3   Lay Summary Development

You need to write a clear lay summary for your proposal. People affected by MS will review your application alongside experts in your field. If your lay summary is too brief or too complex, it will be difficult for them to comment and score your application. And this will have an impact on whether it might be funded.

Our Lay Summary Development scheme can help you. People affected by MS from our Research Network can provide feedback on your application before you submit, focusing on how well you have communicated your research proposal and the importance of the topic to people affected by MS. This isn't part of our review process, but is intended to help you to improve your lay summary before you submit.

If you'd like to go through Lay Summary Development, you'll need to submit a completed Lay Summary Development request form to researchnetwork@mssociety.org.uk.

You must submit your completed form by the Lay Summary Development registration deadline. You will receive the feedback on your summary approximately four weeks before the deadline for submitting your grant application.

You can find the deadline, guidance notes and the request form on [our funding page](#).

You can also find 'Tips for writing a good lay summary' to download from the sidebar of this page.

For all enquiries about involving people affected by MS in any stage of your research, please contact the Public Involvement Manager: researchnetwork@mssociety.org.uk

4.4 Finance and Costs

You should work with finance offices, clinical trials units, local NHS trusts and the local NIHR CRN network to ensure that all costs of research have been identified and appropriately paid for.
Please ensure that your application complies with the following financial criteria:

CATEGORY	ACCEPTABLE COSTS	UNACCEPTABLE COSTS	NOTES
PhD Fellowship costs	**PhD Stipends*** Outside London: Year 1: £18,622 Year 2: £19,088 Year 3: £19,565 Inside London: Year 1: £20,622 Year 2: £21,088 Year 3: £21,565 **PhD tuition fees** Maximum of £7,000 per year. **Running costs** Maximum of £15,000 per year. Running costs include costs in the following categories (only): - Consumables - Equipment - Animals - Human Tissue	Running costs do not include tuition fees or Conference costs.	- Stipends are in accordance with MRC guidelines, are tax-free and include a 2.5% inflationary increase per annum. - Awarded grants will include the host institution's tuition fees at home student rates. - We won't be responsible for any increase in fees once an award has been made. We recommend that you seek advice from your institution when estimating the future level of fees for your application.

CATEGORY	ACCEPTABLE COSTS	UNACCEPTABLE COSTS	NOTES
Consumables	- Laboratory chemicals and materials (e.g. reagents, isotopes, peptides, enzymes, antibodies, gases, proteins, cell/tissue/ bacterial culture). - Data collection materials, if specific to the project. - Where justified, personal computing costs for named individuals engaged to work specifically on the grant. - Patient and public involvement (PPI) costs. - Consultant costs (such as Statisticians).	- Article publishing or open access charges. - Standard per unit IT charges. - Phone/computer accessories (drivers, cases, chargers, batteries).	- You can find further guidance on PPI costs on the NIHR INVOLVE website. - A full justification is required for all consumables.
Equipment	- Equipment that is specific to the grant and greater than £1000 in value (excluding VAT) should be listed here. Equipment less than £1000 in value may be classed as a consumable, and listed accordingly. - Costs may include purchase, delivery and installation of scientific equipment where that equipment is specific to the grant. - Each piece of equipment should be fully justified.	- Equipment cannot be requested for routine or service use. - Equipment becomes the responsibility of the host institution, which must be responsible for its accommodation, operating and servicing costs, and for any insurance that may be necessary.	- All equipment should be entered net of VAT. - Any single piece of equipment costing in excess of £1000 and funded by the Award is our property. - Equipment access costs: Awards cannot be used for Directly Allocated Costs, other than fees relating to the use of core equipment/ services/research facilities that are essential to the project. For such fees, the cost per sample/time period should be stated.

CATEGORY	ACCEPTABLE COSTS	UNACCEPTABLE COSTS	NOTES
Animals	- Animal purchase and transportation costs, maintenance (including food) and experimentation costs.	- Home Office Licences and animal handling training costs are not covered.	- The species and number of animals to be used must be stated. A full justification for their use must be provided in the project details section of the application. - See the 'Use of animals' section below.
Human Tissue	- Cost for the provision of human tissue.		- If human tissue from the MS Society Tissue Bank is to be used in the grant, please include an estimate of the costs according to the tariff found on the Tissue Bank website. - See the 'Use of human tissue section below.
Conferences	- Conference costs can cover a maximum of £1,000 per grant year for the PhD student. - Conference costs can be used to cover travel, registration fee and/or accommodation for meetings/conferences.	- First class travel or accommodation	- Conferences costs are pro rata i.e. if the PhD student is 50% part time, they can claim up to £500 of fees in one year. - Only meetings/conferences directly related to the funded research.

CATEGORY	ACCEPTABLE COSTS	UNACCEPTABLE COSTS	NOTES
Other	- The inclusion of funds for computer equipment or software is permissible only if absolutely essential for the project. However, such costs should not exceed £1,000 per item unless absolutely necessary and a robust justification is provided (excessive costs may be reduced or removed).	- Excess treatment costs - Institutional overheads - Financial services - Personnel services - Recruitment costs - Public relations - General institution libraries - Departmental services (administration, secretarial, printing, photocopying) - Telephone charges and postage or courier services - Journal subscriptions - Furniture - Annual software licencing fees.	- The NHS should fund excess treatment costs (ETCs) - Researchers applying for clinical research grants will need to complete a Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Template (SoECAT) to be eligible for the NIHR portfolio and the support this provides including ETCs. - You will need to factor in the time to complete a SoECAT and have an AcoRD Specialist sign it so that you can upload it as part of your application.

If you believe that any of the 'unacceptable costs' above should be seen as direct costs for your project you must provide full and detailed justification for this in your application.

Increase in costs
We won't be responsible for any increase in the costs of research (whether caused by increased consumables costs, increased personnel costs or otherwise). We won't increase the award to reflect increased research costs, once the award has been made.

Full economic costs
Unlike some other funding bodies, such as the research councils, AMRC member charities, including us, won't fund the full economic costs of research (fECs), or a proportion of these. We'll only pay for the Directly Incurred costs related specifically to the planned research to be undertaken in this grant.

Please see below for guidance on the types of costs. Your institution's finance team should be able to provide further guidance on costings. If you are unsure please get in touch with us. Including ineligible costs may delay application submission or approval of award.

Directly Incurred	These include the familiar direct costs of research such as: - Staff (e.g. research assistant salaries) - Travel and subsistence - Equipment
Directly Allocated (Previously called "in-direct costs)	These are shared costs, based on estimates and don't represent actual costs on a project-by-project basis. Previously, these costs came under the 'indirect costs' heading but the following items are now calculated separately: - Applicants: the time spent by the applicant and co-applicants will be calculated and costed. - Estates: the way these are calculated may vary between institutions. Different categories of space will be costed differently, for example laboratory space will be different to office-based costs. - Other Directly Allocated: these include the costs of shared resources, such as staff and equipment.
Indirect Costs	These costs are necessary for underpinning research but can't be allocated to individual projects. These costs account for things such as computing and information support, central services, general maintenance and other infrastructure costs and will be calculated separately by each Higher Education Institution (HEI), according to TRAC methodology. We won't cover Indirect Costs or any other non-attributable overhead costs in your budget. However, such costs may be eligible under the Charity Research Support Fund.

4.5   Co-funding applications

We're open to co-funding applications with other funders. You should provide full details of the co-funder and amount they would be contributing.

4.6   Use of animals

If your research project uses animals, you must complete the Justification for Animal Use section of the application form. You should review our policy on animal research before completing this. And as members of the AMRC, we fully support their statement on animal research.

We won't support the use of animals in research unless there is no alternative. Animal use procedures will be carefully considered in review of grant applications. We'll only support research using animals if:

- All animal use falls within the regulations laid down by Government, including the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and the Animal Welfare Act 2006.
- You, along with your institution, are responsible for making sure all relevant Home Office licences are held for the duration of the intended projects. Any

research conducted outside of the UK using animals meets the EU directive 2010/63/EU minimum standards for the protection of animals used for scientific purposes.

The 3Rs of animal research

You must address the 3Rs in the Project Details section of the application. You're required to explain how you've considered each of the following:

- **Reducing** the number of animals used to the minimum necessary for a valid result
- **Refining** experiments to minimise any pain, suffering or distress
- **Replacing** animal experiments with alternatives wherever possible.

The NC3Rs have an extensive library of resources for you to implement the 3Rs in your research. When planning animal studies, you should read their experimental design guidance.

Justifications

You must clearly state and justify the following in your application:

- The relevance to humans and why there is no alternative to the use of animals
- The species and number of any animals that could potentially be used
- Any refinement procedures to minimise any pain or distress
- Measures taken to avoid bias (e.g. blinding, randomisation)
- Number of experimental and control groups and sample size per group
- How the sample size was calculated, showing power calculations and including justification of effect size
- Overview of the planned statistical analyses in relation to the primary outcomes to be assessed
- Frequency of measurements/interventions to be used
- If necessary, circumstances in which power calculations aren't appropriate to determine sample size

If these aren't addressed, we'll return your application.

Considerations

You should also consider that we support the AMRC's signing of the Concordat on Openness in Animal Research. This encourages grant holders to be open about their use of animals in research.

The ARRIVE (Animal Research: Reporting In Vivo Experiments) guidelines have been developed by the NC3Rs to improve how *in vivo* studies are reported. They ensure that data from animal experiments can be fully evaluated and used by other researchers. We fully endorse these guidelines. We expect our researchers to comply with them designing your experiments and reporting your research. You can find the full list of guidelines on the ARRIVE website. Please note the ARRIVE Guidelines have now been updated to version 2.0.

For further help in planning your experiments please consider use of the PREPARE Guidelines (Planning Research and Experimental Procedures on Animals: Recommendations for Excellence). These guidelines include checklists which can help with improving reproducibility, reducing waste and promoting alternatives in animal research through better planning and communication.

4.7   Use of human tissue

Donated human tissue is a vital and precious resource, therefore you must justify why human tissue will be used in your research. If your research uses human tissue, you must confirm that you will comply with the appropriate legislation and follow the relevant Codes of Practice issued by the Human Tissue Authority (HTA). The type of tissue and quantity must be fully justified in your application.

4.8   Use of the UK MS Register

If you intend to use the UK MS Register in your project, you must contact the Register team as early as possible. All projects that will use the MS Register must be reviewed and approved by the UK MS Register's Scientific Steering Committee (SSC). You are responsible for obtaining SSC approval **before** you submit your application to us. Confirmation of SSC approval must be attached to your application. This allows us to verify that your project is feasible and can be supported by the Register before we validate your application and send it out for review. Getting SSC approval can take time, so make sure you factor this in when working towards our application submission deadline. You can find out more about the SSC approval process, and SSC meeting dates and deadlines, on the MS Register website.

You can find out more about using the MS Register in your research project on the UK MS Register website and in the Resources for researchers area of our website.

4.9   References

You should cite all essential references relevant to your proposal. Please enter all references in the following format:

1st Author: Year: Title: Journal: Volume: Pages
Copies of in-press or submitted publications relevant to the proposal should accompany the application, please add these in the "Attachments" section.

5.   Criteria for review

Your application will be scored on the quality of science and relevance to MS. The research environment and quality of the training provided will also be key considerations for review of PhD Fellowship Awards. Our Early Career Researcher Assessment Framework (Appendix I) lists the competencies we believe early career researchers need to develop to support their careers. In the application form you'll be asked to consider how these competencies will be developed by the PhD fellow when describing the training your student will be undertaking.

Applications will be reviewed and scored by both external peer and lay reviewers and by The Expert Review Network (TERN).

You can also suggest up to three potential peer reviewers for your application in the "Project Details" section of the online application form. And tell us any reviewers you don't want to review your application, with justification.

- Once you've submitted your application, we validate it to make sure it fits the remit of the PhD Fellowship Awards round.
- If your application is eligible, we send it for independent, external review by members of the research community with relevant expertise and members of our Research Network.
- Once we've received the external reviews, you're invited to provide a rebuttal to the reviewers' comments. You'll have 10 days to submit this and we'll advise you of the rebuttal period dates in advance.
- Based on the TERN review scores, low scoring applications are then triaged. This involves a shortlisting process by the TERN Review Panel Chair, Vice Chair and a lay panel member. We will tell all applicants the triage outcomes around a month before funding outcomes are announced.
- Shortlisted applications are considered by invited TERN members at the Career Development Awards TERN Review Panel meeting.
- The TERN Review Panel provides a recommendation to us about which applications should be funded.
- Our Board of Trustees then considers their recommendations for funding.
- Following approval by the Board, we'll communicate official funding offers, awards are made and projects start.

The scoring guidance used by our reviewers is found on the next page.

PhD Fellowship Awards Scoring Guidance for reviewers

Generic criteria	PhD Fellowship Award specific	Rating	Score	
• Research question(s) are likely to result in significant benefit for people affected by MS and/or advancement in our scientific understanding of MS • Research team is very strong, containing all relevant disciplines to deliver project outcomes • Very good value for money • Proposal is clear and well written • People affected by MS are actively involved and influencing project at all relevant stages (PPI) • Proposal has a clear and realistic pathway to impact. Potential impact is highly significant and appropriate to grant type. • Research design is excellent, appropriate and highly feasible for the Award type.	• Excellent training and educational environment, with clear plans to help Fellow develop ECR competencies (see Appendix I). The supervisory team are well placed to support student in their career development • The proposed design, methods and analyses are well developed. • The work is highly appropriate for a PhD project and achievable within the timeframe.	Exceptional	5	Highly fundable
		High quality	4.5	
		Good	4	
		Above average	3.5	
• Research question(s) are likely to result in benefit for people affected by MS or some advancement in the scientific understanding of MS Research team has relevant experience and contains most of the relevant disciplines to deliver project outcomes • Acceptable value for money • Some elements of involving people affected by MS, where appropriate, but not well integrated or well supported • Elements of the application are unclear • Project would only be fundable with some changes • Proposal has a reasonable pathway to impact. Potential impact is significant and mostly appropriate to grant type. • Research design is acceptable for the Award type.	• Acceptable training and educational environment, with some plans to help Fellow develop ECR competencies. The supervisory team are able to support the student in their career development. • The proposed research design, methods and analyses are acceptable but require some further explanation. • The work is reasonably appropriate for a PhD and probably achievable within the timeframe.	Acceptable	3.5	Potentially fundable
		Borderline acceptable	2.5	
• Research question(s) are irrelevant with no tangible benefit to people affected by MS. • Key skills missing from the research team • Poor value for money • Unclear application • Involvement of people affected by MS inappropriate or limited/ lacking • Pathway to impact is unclear and/or unrealistic. Little or no potential impact or poorly described/not appropriate to grant type. • Research design is unsuitable for the Award type.	• Poor training environment and educational environment, with no plans to help Fellow develop ECR competencies. The supervisory team can't support the student's career development • There are serious scientific concerns about the proposed research (it is poor/ flawed/ duplicative) • The proposed research design, methods and analyses are not well developed. • The work is not appropriate or achievable within the timeframe of a PhD.	Below acceptable	2	Not fundable
		Serious scientific weaknesses or other major concerns	1.5	
		Not fundable	1	

6.   Resubmission Policy

Unless we explicitly invite you to resubmit your application, we only allow **one** resubmission of any previously unsuccessful application. If you are resubmitting an application, you should indicate this in the **'Other Support'** section of the application form and complete the text box according to the guidance.

Why?

Over the past five years, only 8% of resubmissions have been successful.

Your applications should be carefully considered and show a high level of grantsmanship. You should thoroughly review them before submission, and ask any co-applicants to do the same.
Our resubmission policy aims to promote a culture of high-quality submissions and high-quality reviews that will benefit you, our reviewers and us alike. This will benefit the MS community too, by helping us select and fund high quality and relevant research that has an impact on people with MS.

What constitutes a resubmission?

A resubmission is any application that was previously submitted to our Grant Rounds. This includes if you submit the same application under a different name. Or if you submit the same application under a different funding stream (e.g. changing a PhD Fellowship to a Catalyst Award).

Exceptions
We may invite a small number of further resubmissions if there is compelling evidence from peer review, if advised by the TERN Review Panels.

Preparing a resubmission:

If you're preparing a resubmission, you must include the following in the 'Other Support' section
- Responses to any of the comments or considerations previously provided during the review process
- A summary of any substantial changes to the application

What constitutes sufficient change to qualify as a new submission?
We'll only qualify applications as a new submission if they contain major changes. It's not sufficient to include only minor changes or considering reviewer comments as a new submission.

Consequences of an Uninvited Resubmission:

If we feel that a new application is a resubmission, or if you submit an uninvited resubmission that has already been submitted twice, then we'll automatically reject it.

7.   Contact us

Please let us know if you have any questions or need help.

Email us at: research@mssociety.org.uk or call us on 020 8438 0822.

Thank you for your interest in our research funding.

Appendix I Early Career Researcher Assessment Framework

This Assessment Framework outlines the competencies we believe early career researchers need to develop to support their careers. In the application form you'll be asked to consider how these competencies will be developed by the PhD fellow when describing the training your student will be undertaking.

Key competencies	Candidates should:
Research vision	• Demonstrate a high commitment to MS research with a clear understanding of how their research contributes to our Research Strategy. • Demonstrate independent research ideas that are likely to result in significant benefits for people affected by MS; including, but not limited to, addressing fundamental gaps in our knowledge of MS pathophysiology, development and implementation of novel treatments, risk factors and prevention, or improved care and services for people affected by MS. • Be able to describe the long term plans for their research, including a route for the findings to be implemented to realise the benefits for people affected by MS. • Have an awareness of research in other fields and embrace opportunities for collaborative and interdisciplinary working.
Research experience and potential	• Have prior experience in MS research or personal motivation to work in MS and evidence of work in a related and relevant research field. • Hold a PhD, if they are a non-clinical researcher or be able to demonstrate equivalent research experience, if they are clinically qualified. • Have delivered previous research project(s) and show evidence of impactful outputs*, for example, first author publications or critical contributions to multi-author publications, conference presentations or policy outputs. • Actively be enhancing their growing "tool-box" of skills, which will serve as a strong basis for future independent research activity, whilst being increasingly recognised for their specialist expertise. • Be establishing and able to demonstrate their own network(s) of research contacts independent of the current group leader/supervisor (e.g. through multicentre collaborations) *Research outputs may include but are not limited to preprints, contribution to consortia, patents, key datasets, software, novel assays and reagents and publications. When considering research publications, our reviewers will recognise that the content of a scientific paper and its influence in the field holds more significance than publication metrics or where it was published.

Personal development	• Describe how they have designed their proposal to include research and credible plans for a training and educational programme that will support further career development and networking with peers and superiors. • Demonstrate appropriate selection of supervisor(s) and project team that will enable them to gain the specific skills needed to deliver their current and future research plans. • Have identified and be pursuing opportunities to access career development support, such as mentoring, learning new skills, and spending time in or collaborating closely with other research groups or settings, either within the UK or overseas. These opportunities can either be within the research institution the Fellow has worked in, or through multicentre collaborations.
Leadership	• Show evidence of leading and inspiring, for example through organisation of peer activities, workshops, journal clubs, or supporting individuals at earlier career stages such as Masters and PhD level students or clinical trainees.
Communication and engagement skills	• Have excellent communication and interpersonal skills across different audiences, including academic and public, demonstrated, for example, through presentations at scientific conferences and involvement at public meetings (for example, those organised by us or one of our local groups). • Demonstrate enthusiasm for active involvement (PPI) of people with MS in the development of their specific project and wider research plans. • Show how their research outcomes will be communicated and disseminated within and outside the research community • Be prepared to demonstrate how their research aligns with our mission and our promise to people with MS.
Profile and influence	• Have a strong, practical sense of how they will develop their careers to become leading independent researchers. • Be supportive of the wider research agenda through, for example, peer review activity, providing lectures/seminars, teaching/clinical duties and participation in internal committees.

We're the MS Society.
Our community is here for you
through the highs, lows and
everything in between.
We understand what life's like with MS.

Together, we are strong enough to stop MS.

mssociety.org.uk

Contact us

MS National Centre 020 8438 0700
info@mssociety.org.uk

MS Helpline Freephone 0808 800 8000 (weekdays 9am-9pm)
helpline@mssociety.org.uk

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►Let's stop MS together