

# Wellcome Career Development Awards

Wellcome [Discovery Research remit](#) (see Wellcome webpages for more information)

Applications can present research from any discipline as long as it has the potential to improve human life, health and wellbeing, and aligns with Wellcome's funding remit. Applications for awards under Wellcome's Discovery Research remit do not need to be within their health challenge programmes (mental health, climate and health, and infectious disease).

Wellcome will particularly welcome applications that bring together different disciplines to tackle problems creatively and with new perspectives. Applicants must think boldly and with ambition, asking challenging questions with the potential for real impact.

Wellcome have provided [guidance on writing applications](#) and using [Wellcome Grant Tracker](#).

Wellcome [Career Development Award](#) (see Wellcome webpages for more information)

Awards usually last for 8 years, but this can be shorter if appropriate to the discipline, or longer if the award is to be held part time. You can only hold one Career Development Award and it cannot be renewed.

## Key eligibility criteria

(See the ['Eligibility and Suitability'](#) section of the Career Development Award webpages for more information):

- You will already be driving your own research (in a research post where you have responsibility for developing your own research agenda)
- You must be able to contribute at least 80% of your research time to the award.
- You must have completed one or two substantial periods of research after your initial training (PhD) and made important contributions to your area of research.
- If you already hold a permanent, open-ended or long-term rolling contract:
  - You must have been appointed to this post within the last three years (extended for career breaks, part-time working (including part-time working on research due to clinical duties) or significant change of research discipline).
  - You cannot ask for your own salary as part of this award.
  - If the three-year limit falls between two deadlines for this scheme, and you would benefit from applying to the second deadline, Wellcome will permit this. You must discuss your situation with a Wellcome staff member and should secure written confirmation of their position.

You are not eligible to apply if:

- You hold, or have held, an equivalent fellowship at this career stage from any funder (except current Wellcome grantholders with active grants, e.g. a Sir Henry Dale Fellowship)
- You have applied as the lead applicant for another of Wellcome's schemes and are awaiting a decision (you can only submit one application to Wellcome at a time).
- Your proposed research will require transfer of grant funds into mainland China.

## Resubmissions

If you are unsuccessful in applying to this scheme you can submit one more full application for the same project with significant changes. You do not need to contact Wellcome first.

## Level of Funding

The level and duration of funding must be justified by the research programme. Wellcome do not specify a minimum or maximum funding amount. You cannot apply to carry out activities that involve the transfer of grant funds into mainland China. **You must seek advice and assistance from your departmental Grants team and/or Research Facilitator** when preparing the application costing.

You can apply for the following costs to support your research (see the '[What We Offer](#)' section of the Career Development Award webpages for more information):

- A basic salary for the Applicant, provided you do not hold a permanent, open-ended or long-term rolling contract
- Salaries for up to four Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff, working full or part time
- Staff costs in addition to these 4 FTE staff members can be requested for specialist service staff (e.g. data analysis, fieldwork, clinical studies) or support staff for the applicant or any staff employed on the grant if they are disabled or have a long-term condition.
- Studentships are not provided on this award. However if a pre-doctoral research assistant is employed on the grant, you can ask Wellcome to cover their PhD fees. You can ask for PhD fees for one research assistant at a time on the grant.
- Continuing professional development and training costs
- Materials and consumables, Animals, Equipment, Access Charges (e.g. for facilities)
- Travel and subsistence for conferences and collaborative travel where justified (with a limit for conferences of £2,000 per year for the lead applicant and £1,000 per year for each staff member employed on the grant). Note Wellcome's [carbon offset policy](#)
- Clinical Research costs according to AcoRD principles
- Public engagement and patient involvement costs
- Outsourcing work to contract research organisations
- A list of other allowed costs (see website, under 'What we offer')
- Inflation Allowance according to a set scale
- Overheads in limited specific cases only

## Preparing an application

All applications are submitted through Wellcome Grant Tracker. You must **consult your Department's grants team** for advice on local deadlines and submit your application for **Research Services review** at least 5 working days before the Wellcome deadline.

A template [application form](#) (PDF) is available for download.

Letters of support for a Career Development Award application are required from:

1. The applicant's current Supervisor
2. Finance Director if overheads are claimed (likely to be not applicable for the University)

Content must be completed directly into Wellcome Grant Tracker by:

1. Lead Applicant
2. Sponsor – this will typically be the applicant's Head of Department. They must have authority to make commitments to the applicant from the University and describe how the applicant's research contributes to the University's strategic aims (more information below)
3. Additional Sponsor(s) if the applicant is spending >3 months working away from Oxford
4. Authorised Organisational Approver – this will be a representative of Research Services

## Sponsor and Mentor:

The **Sponsor** (typically the Head of Department) must:

- Confirm workload expectations with the applicant: you should not spend more than 20% of your time on non-research related activities, for example clinical duties, teaching or

administration. If you're based in a clinical craft specialty, you may spend up to 40% of your time on clinical duties.

- Ensure the research environment will support you to complete your programme.
- Organise a discussion about your future at the organisation beyond the award.

In the application form in Wellcome Grant Tracker the Sponsor must:

1. Explain how your research fits with the strategic aims of the organisation – more information below.
2. Confirm via tick-box in Grant Tracker that:
  - the space and resources needed will be available for the duration of the grant
  - You will have the status and benefits of other academic staff of similar seniority.
  - You and any staff employed on the grant will have 10 days a year (pro rata if part-time) to undertake training and continuing professional development (CPD) in line with the Concordat. This should include the responsible conduct of research, research leadership, people management, diversity and inclusion, and the promotion of a healthy research culture.
  - Induction will be arranged including onboarding, embedding and planning for the award holder when they join the organisation and/or start the award.
  - If you do not have a permanent, open-ended or long-term rolling contract, that the Host Organisation will either (i) provide you with one of those types of contract by the end of the award OR (ii) carry out a formal review process, no less than two years before the end of your award, to discuss your future at the organisation, including such contracts as possibilities.
  - Any teaching buyout, if applicable, will leave at least 10% of your time for teaching and is not covered by other grants.
3. Outline other support the University will provide during the award – more information below

If your proposal involves work for more than three months outside your host organisation you must have an **Additional Sponsor** at that location who can guarantee the space and resources needed during the visit. Additional Sponsor(s) must confirm in Grant Tracker their support for the applicant and that their organisation will allocate space and resources for the duration of the award.

You must name a **Mentor** with a track record in training and mentorship. This individual will support you for the period of the award and give guidance on how to:

- manage your application
- develop your research career
- progress with your personal development
- manage the processes and regulations at your host organisation (although they do not need to be based at your host organisation).

The Sponsor and Mentor can be the same individual.

[For the Applicant: Completing the application form section “Your Research Environment details”](#)

The application form includes a number of questions about your research environment and promoting a positive research culture. Below are some suggestions on what to include in these sections. Answers should include examples wherever possible. Your application need not cover every point below.

*Q. What considerations led you to choose this research environment for your research? How will this setting help you to develop your research identity and explore your research questions? How will it help you to develop your leadership and management skills? (300 words max)*

- Why is the University and your Department the best place for this project? Who will help stimulate, challenge and inspire you as you develop your own research questions?

- Why is the physical infrastructure here well suited for the project? Are there facilities you will have access to that don't exist elsewhere?
- Who beyond your immediate unit, institute, or department would you like to collaborate with more than you do now? Consider collaborations beyond Oxford as well as within it, and both academic and non-academic partners.
- How will this environment help your research to find the most important audiences and stakeholders, e.g. for further development?
- How will you engage with any mechanisms available to help you develop, beyond training courses (as they are covered in a separate section)? Are there mentors or role models you would like to talk to?
- Be especially careful with this section if the programme of research in the application will take place in the same place as you are now: why is this still the best environment and how will you use it to develop your independence? What will change from the way you work now?

*Q. Describe your approach to developing and supporting a positive and inclusive research culture (500 words max)*

- How do you ensure that every member of the group feels valued?
- How do you recognise/reward work of those around you?
- How do you encourage those around you to have a good work life balance?
- How do you support the development of leadership skills for those in your group?
- Do you discuss career routes and opportunities (including outside of academia) with the staff you line-manage? (if applicable)
- Do you currently mentor anyone/have a mentor? What types of mentoring are there on offer?
- What do you do to reduce the impact of academic competition and the pressure to publish on colleagues' well-being?
- What is your management style?
- How will you promote diversity in recruitment?
- How do you promote equality, diversity and inclusion in your group/department/field of research?
- How do you promote research integrity? Have all staff completed the University's Research Integrity training?
- How do you induct new staff?
- How do you manage any conflicts of interest?
- What do you do to promote collaboration?
- Do you encourage your early career researchers to engage with industry? How do you support them to expand their networks?

Remember that research culture covers everyone in the group, including technicians and support roles as well as postdocs and students. Wellcome recommend [this set of examples of actions to improve research culture](#), but you should use them to prompt your own ideas appropriate to your research group.

*Q. Your organisation will give you and the staff employed on your grant a minimum of 10 days a year to undertake training and continuing professional development. Explain how you will use this time.*

- List any courses that you or your staff will attend.
- Think about what training/development will help you and the staff on the grant develop to the next stage in their career.
- Are there courses in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) that you and other staff on the grant may not yet have taken?
- What training might be useful for working outside academia, whether alongside an academic career or as a different career direction?

- Will you encourage staff to visit other groups/institutions to develop new skills? Where will they go, and who will support them there?
- How will you ensure that staff on the grant develop their 'soft skills', not just their technical skills? What about your own management and leadership skills?
- You can ask for costs to cover training for the *technical and research skills* needed to deliver your proposed research for yourself and also for staff employed on the grant for at least 12 months at 50% FTE.
- You can ask for up to £500 per year per staff member for *career development training* where the university does not provide it for yourself and also for staff employed on the grant for at least 12 months at 50% FTE.

### For the Sponsor: Completing the application form section "Your Sponsors"

Q. Describe how the applicant's research contributes to the aims of your organisation (250 words max)

- The University of Oxford's [Strategic Plan for 2018-2024](#) includes broad statements about research: to which does the project best align?
- How does the project complement other activity in the unit/department, and how will it be more effective to do the project here than at another institution?
- Are there Networks, Research Centres/Institutes, or other wider groupings at Oxford from which this research will benefit and to which it will contribute? (There is a [list of networks](#) in Medical Sciences listed on the MSD webpages)
- If the research may ultimately lead to new approaches that will benefit human health or wellbeing, how might that draw on other strengths and capabilities at the University, including existing collaborations?
- If the project will be developing techniques and methodologies, what other research in the University might ultimately benefit from them?
- What will you, the Mentor and the applicant do during the award to maximise the effectiveness of any such synergies?

Q. What additional support will you provide to the applicant? (300 words max)

- Wellcome suggest referring to how you will support the applicant to develop leadership and management skills and their research capabilities.
- If your Department has a particular development programme for researchers at this career stage, you could outline it.
- Are there collaborations or partnerships that you can help them to develop?
- If the Mentor will be someone other than you, you might outline why they have been chosen and any distinctive support they will bring, as the application form does not allow any space for that elsewhere.

### For the Supervisor: Providing a Letter of Support

Q. Upload a letter of support from your current supervisor (500 words max)

- This should be someone that knows you and your work well. It could be your supervisor, group leader, head of centre/unit or equivalent. The letter should show clearly the person's name, position and address.
- They should indicate why you are ready for the award, with reference to Wellcome's '[Eligibility and Suitability](#)' criteria for the Award. They should describe the qualities of your current and/or former work that make you suitable for the Award at this point in your career.
- Discuss with your current Supervisor if they will write the letter, or if they want you to write the first draft and send it to them for editing

- If your current Supervisor is not in a position to make such a recommendation (e.g. because you have only recently joined the department), then you can ask an alternative Supervisor from your most recent previous employer.

### Input from the Medical Sciences Division

Applicants from departments within the Medical Sciences Division should notify the Medical Sciences Divisional Office ([research@medsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:research@medsci.ox.ac.uk)) that they are preparing a Career Development Award application to a given round.

The Divisional Office will review content for the sections **“Your Research Environment details”** and **“Your Sponsors”** (Sponsor’s statements of strategic importance and provision of additional support), with the aim of ensuring consistency across applications from MSD.

Draft content must be sent by email to [research@medsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:research@medsci.ox.ac.uk) by a deadline which will be communicated at the start of each round. The deadline will be pegged to the Wellcome application deadlines for both the Career Development Awards and the Discovery Awards rounds, and will commonly be three to four weeks before the Wellcome submission deadline.

MSD will review the content and offer feedback as necessary; the team will aim to return comments at least one week before the Research Services submission deadline for the relevant scheme.

The Medical Sciences Divisional Office will not be providing letters of support from the Head of Division for applications for Career Development Awards.

### Shortlisting and Interview

If you are shortlisted you will be invited for an interview. External expert review will be sought on shortlisted applications. Reviewers will be chosen based on expertise and not on their level of seniority. Unattributed comments will be sent to the applicant before interview.

Shortly before interview you will be asked to provide a pre-recorded presentation which the Committee will watch before you enter the interview room (there is no requirement for a further presentation at the interview). The interviewers will aim to assess a set of criteria, rather than one specific aspect of the proposal.

Final funding decisions will be made by the Discovery Research Decision Board. Applicants will be informed of the funding decision by email. Written feedback will be provided to all unsuccessful applicants including the basis of the decision.

### Authors/Reviewers of this Guidance

Emma Nagel-Smith (Research Services)  
Pamela Reid (Department of Psychiatry)  
Michele Warren (MSDO)  
Adelyn Wise (MSDO)