

Action Medical Research Training Fellowship application instructions

When preparing your application please adhere to this guidance – applications that are late, incomplete or do not follow the guidance may be rejected.

We recommend reading all instructions before starting the application - you may find it helpful to print a colour copy for reference. Frequently asked questions can be found at the end of this file.

Table of Contents

THE APPLICATION PROCESS OVERVIEW	1
HOW TO COMPLETE THE WEBFORM.....	2
Instructions for completing files that MUST be uploaded to your application	4
How to submit your signatures.....	8
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS/TROUBLESHOOTING.....	10

THE APPLICATION PROCESS OVERVIEW

You should complete the web form including your supporting documents by the deadline of **Tuesday 22 October 2024 by 5PM. Earlier applications are welcomed.**

The form includes a section for files you will need to upload, including the finance template. This template and other important documents you need to refer to (such as the example research agreement and grant policy) are available via a link in the invitation to apply email sent to the Research Training Fellowship applicant. Guidance on how to complete the templates is on pages 4-8 in this instruction file.

The web form is completely separate to the main charity website and you can only access the form via this link <https://actionmedicalresearch-applications.org.uk/fellowship/init.pl>

Signature pages: If you need extra time for signatures then you should send a signed version of the Excel finance sheet to us up to 2 weeks after submitting your web form. See page 9 for more information.


Data Protection

Unless otherwise agreed, all information that the Applicants and/or Institution supply to the Charity relating to any applications or Grants awarded will be used for the purposes of processing the Application and/or Grant and for the purpose of peer review, audit and/or evaluation. All Shared Personal Data will be processed in accordance with Data Protection law. Data supplied in the application relating to the applicant(s) and/or individuals funded by the Grant may be used by the Charity for the purposes of grant administration. It may also be disclosed to, and processed by, external peer reviewers, government and other research and professional bodies including potential joint funding partners.

Please see next page

HOW TO COMPLETE THE WEBFORM

! This section contains important information.


The Research Training Fellowship (RTF) applicant should  the application at <https://actionmedicalresearch-applications.org.uk//fellowship/init.pl> The RTF applicant (not the supervisor) should complete the form. **Only one person should be in the webform at any one time to avoid overwriting what others have entered.** A password reset function is also available on this login screen.


Applications list screen

Click  on this screen to begin your form. Once the application is started you can:




 your answers,  to the application form,  the application form

Or 'change your password'.



Do **not** click  as this will delete the application permanently.

If you need to PRINT a basic copy of your answers this can be done via a button on the  screen. Note you can only access the view button when the website is open for applications.

Navigating around the form

! Don't use the back button on your browser – please use the ,  and  buttons to move around the form. If you enter a page of information and then click the back button on your browser then you will **lose the information** you typed on that page. Please complete the required fields first. These mandatory fields allow you to save all other answers on that page.




Save and exit/ Logging on

 allows you to continue at a later time. When logging back in click on continue and **Do not press the  button!**

Structure of the webform and import requirements

Some fields are required fields or have validation rules to enable successful importing into our database. Required fields on the webform are marked with an *. The form will not allow you to progress to another section and may delete information that you have entered if these fields are not correctly completed. If this happens a **red** error message will appear near the top of the screen, which indicates which question needs to be corrected.

There are five main sections of the online application web form.

- **Part ** covers basic details of the application. **Required fields** – Question A1 and question A2 – Length of fellowship (in months) and amounts requested from the charity for this fellowship.
- **Part  – ** cover RTF applicant and supervisor contact details. There is space for a maximum of five supervisors. Please leave blank any supervisors sections you do not require. Applicants/Supervisors must be employed at a UK research institute such as a university or hospital. Collaborators from outside the UK or not based at UK research institute (including any patient

representatives) can be named in part C of the form as a collaborator and their letters of support submitted as described later in these instructions. **Required fields -for the RTF applicant** The RTF name, contact institution, address details and email address (**Questions: B1, B4, B6 and B6**)

- **Part C** contains questions about the details of the project and also details of your training and career goals. It includes a non-confidential lay statement (non-scientific description suitable for members of the public).
- **Part D** is the file upload section where you upload your completed additional files **REQUIRED FIELDS; The finance file D1a and protocol D2 must be uploaded.**
- **Part E** is a **checkbox** (required field) confirming that once the **Submit form** button has been clicked no further changes to the application can be made online.

The Review button and the Submit form Button

At the end of section E there is a button called **Review** which allows you to carry out a final check before submitting your application. At the end of the review screen there are two buttons:

- The **Edit form** button returns you to the questions screen so that you can amend your answers.
- The **Submit form** button **submits your application. Only click submit form when you are sure your application is ready for submission.** Once submitted no further changes can be made online. If a half-completed application is submitted, it will be deleted from our system and then will need to be re-entered.

Once the application is submitted the website will send a copy of the application as a PDF. A word/pdf format that is easier to read (including the additional files submitted to us) will be produced by our database for the referees.

Symbols on the form

- ? can be clicked on to display additional help

Characters/symbols and the return key (new paragraph) not accepted by the form

! Please note that some characters/symbols are unfortunately not accepted by this version of the online form. Please separate information using punctuation such as commas, full stops, colons and the space bar. **Do not use the return key (carriage returns) as unfortunately when we download into our database the carriage returns are automatically removed.**

Standard bullet points are accepted by the form but **please avoid unusual symbols such as:**

Less than or greater than symbols < >

The euro sign €.

The apostrophe ' that is under the @ is accepted, but a similar character on the top left of the keyboard may not work.

The Word or PDF files that you upload to the application form in Part **D** (eg the protocol) can include these symbols and carriage returns.

Maximum field lengths

Estimated word counts or character counts are given on some fields. This is normally based on 7 characters to a word. Spaces are counted as characters. Characters beyond the limit in the form can be rejected by the form.

Uploading files

-Label your files as specified eg 'protocol' or 'finances' or 'supervisor statement'. Excessively long file names (such as publication titles) cause errors.

-Where possible it is preferable that we receive files in portrait orientation so that we can combine them into one file for the reviewers.

-PLEASE ONLY SUBMIT ONE COPY OF EACH FILE

How to upload files in part D of the webform

Click choose file and select the file you wish to upload. Click UPLOAD to upload the file. If the file has successfully uploaded a green message displaying the filename will appear. You will not be able to click into the file but can upload the file again if you are unsure whether you have uploaded the final version.

You can only upload Word documents (.docx), Excel spreadsheets, Adobe PDFs and JPEG files.

Instructions for completing files that MUST be uploaded to your application

If these are not included your application will be considered incomplete.

1. PROTOCOL

Name the file as 'surname_protocol'

The protocol should be written by the RTF applicant but drawn up in consultation with the supervisor.

The protocol should include:

1. The work to be undertaken during your fellowship including the hypothesis or reasoning behind the study, a description of the methods including overall study design, power calculations and numbers of patients / animals to be used, clinical / laboratory techniques, operative procedures, data analysis and description of any difficulties anticipated.
2. Full justification for consumable expenses sought.
3. The long term relevance of this work to the Actions's (and, if applicable, BPNA's) interests and child health (referring to the scope outlined in the call documentation).

We advise you refer to the assessment criteria towards the end of this document.

- The protocol should **NOT** be more than six sides of A4 (minimum 1½ line-spacing, not smaller than size 12 font, margins not less than 1.5cm) so that reviewers can easily read the text.
- You may include references as additional pages (not included in the page count).
- Pictures, diagrams, preliminary unpublished data or other essential information necessary for the application these can be included as an appendix of no more than two additional A4 sides. While preliminary studies are not required, including such data is encouraged to strengthen your application. The protocol, references and appendix can be submitted as one file. Where possible please keep the file size below 5Mb.

- Save images as a PNG file (this should retain more detail and be easily viewed) or JPG file. JPG may cause loss of detail on images with high contrast areas (such as text), although if you save at a high quality setting (90 to 95 will still reduce file size) then this will be less of a problem.

Applications that do not follow these instructions may not be considered.

2. FINANCE SHEET

Name the file as 'surname_finance'

Complete the Excel template following the 2 pages of instructions at the top of the template about research costs.

Do not tamper with the Excel template as it won't transfer properly into our system if modified.

Upload your Excel Finance sheet as a .xlsx file

! Important - approval from your Institution

You should check the finances on your Excel finance sheet as soon as possible with your Research Services Office. You will need to send the "Example RTF agreement" including the "Conditions for making a research training fellowship grant application" section, and "MRC Good research practice - principles and guidelines" documents to your Research Services Office along with your application. The email we sent to the Research Training Fellowship applicant contains a link to these files.

Please note, if applicable, a SoeCAT form may also be required. This calculates the different activities and costs associated with clinical research – see point 11 below for further information.

For information about the signatures process – see page 9.

3. A statement of support from each supervisor

Name the file as 'surname_supervisor statements'

The statement from each supervisor should include:

- Details of the suitability of the candidate for a Research Training Fellowship.
- Details of the Supervisor's experience of research supervision (if no previous experience, please name an experienced co-supervisor).
- Number of students currently supervised.
- Details of the Supervisor's recent publications of relevance to the application.

Combine all supervisor statements into one file. The statements should not exceed one side of A4 per supervisor (additional space is allowed for references).

4. CV for the Research Training Fellowship applicant ONLY

Name the file as 'surname_CV'

Include:

- A short summary (maximum of 250 words) of any research undertaken so far, indicating what you consider to be your most important research findings.
- Professional qualifications and education with dates
- Details of any prizes or awards
- Present position
- Employment history
- Publications and presentations. List your publications.

Maximum length 2 pages.

Do not include CVs for supervisors

5. Salary scales

Name the file as 'surname_salary scales'

ONLY provide the page of the scale that is relevant to the salary of the RTF applicant. If you do not have a copy of the relevant scale please speak to your research support team or finance office.

6. Collaborator letters

Name the file as 'surname_collaborator'

If the application includes collaboration with other researchers/groups/patient representatives please provide signed letter(s) of support – if possible please combine letters in one file.

7. Justification for the use of animals (if required)

Name the file as 'surname_animal justification'

The charity will only support the use of animals where no viable alternative exists. The application must have regard to animal welfare and advances in the refinement, replacement and reduction of animal use. Refer to the guidance details below before answering the questions at the bottom of this section.

The Applicant shall ensure:

- a) animals are only used in the Research Program where this is essential, and the research question being addressed cannot be answered using alternative methods;
- b) any part of the Research Program involving the use of animals is designed and implemented so that:
 - (i) the experimental design is appropriate and is likely to answer the research question;
 - (ii) the least sentient species with the appropriate physiology is used;
 - (iii) animals are appropriately housed and maintained in a species-appropriate manner that minimises stress and maximises the animals' welfare;
 - (iv) the number of animals used is the minimum sufficient to provide adequate statistical power to answer the questions posed; and
 - (v) the severity of procedures performed on animals is kept to a minimum. To that end, experiments should be kept as short as possible and appropriate anaesthesia, analgesia and humane endpoints should be used to minimise any pain and suffering;
- c) all activities involving animals comply with the core principles set out in the cross-funder guidance 'Responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research: Expectations of the major research councils and charitable funding bodies' (available at www.nc3rs.org.uk);
- d) when animals are purchased from commercial suppliers, UK suppliers are used wherever possible, to minimise the risk of suffering during transport;
- e) compliance at all times with the provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (as may be amended or supplemented from time-to-time) and any advice, guidance or requirements received from the relevant ethics committee, NC3Rs and/or other appropriate animal welfare body;
- f) all necessary licences, consents and approvals have been received before any work requiring such licenses, consent and/or approval is initiated;

Provide a Justification for the use of animals document (maximum two sides of A4) and include all of the following information:

- i. Home Office licence numbers (institute, project and personal) covering the procedures outlined.
- ii. Indicate whether the necessary approvals have been given by an Animal Welfare and Ethical Approval Body.
- iii. The types of animals to be used, numbers involved and costs
- iv. The source of animals and how they will be transported and maintained
- v. Please state the severity of the procedures (mild/moderate/severe) and then give further details of any moderate or severe procedures (no more than 250 words).

vi. A brief justification on why alternatives, such as human tissue or other approaches, cannot be used, plus evidence that the species chosen is appropriate and the minimum number of animals will be used to give statistically valid results. Give details of any sample size calculation and statistical advice sought.

List of files that you CAN include in your application

These files may enhance your application if you are able to include them. We understand it is not always possible to obtain these documents prior to a grant being awarded but if your application is successful you would have to supply them before the grant is activated.

8. Ethical approval

Name the file as 'surname_ethics'

If applicable provide a copy of your ethical approval letter as granted by your ethical committee to the proposed research. You may not be able to include this if you are in the process of applying or you are not yet able to apply. Contact your supervisor or the university/hospital Research Services department if you are unsure whether you need to supply this document. **Do not** upload ethics application files, just the approval letter if you have one.

9. Sponsor letter

Name the file as 'surname_sponsor'

If applicable provide a sponsor letter for the proposed research from your institution. Research that involves the NHS, for example patients, patient data, human participants, human tissue or human cells, requires a formal sponsor willing to take primary responsibility for monitoring and enforcement of the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research. Sponsorship may be dependent on gaining ethical approval, but we still need an appropriate organisation, such as a UK university or NHS trust, to confirm that they will act as sponsor. Action Medical Research is a funder not a sponsor. Please contact your supervisor or the university/hospital research services department if you are unsure whether you need to supply this document.

The link below provides a more detailed explanation of what a sponsor is. This policy framework sets out principles of good practice in the management and conduct of health and social care research in the UK. <https://www.hra.nhs.uk/planning-and-improving-research/policies-standards-legislation/uk-policy-framework-health-social-care-research/>

10. Home Office project licence approval

Name the file as 'surname_home office'

If applicable, provide a copy of the **front page ONLY** of the APPROVED Home Office project licence. Contact your supervisor or the university/hospital Research Services department if you are unsure whether you need to supply this. Do not upload the application for a Home Office licence.

11. SoECAT form

Name the file as 'surname_SoECAT'

If applicable, please upload your SoECAT HRA export file to your grant application.

Researchers applying for clinical research funding need to complete a Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Tool (SoECAT) to be eligible for the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) portfolio and the support this provides. This change came into effect on 1 October 2018. SoECAT is designed to make sure costs are attributed in line with the AcoRD framework and that this is consistent across the UK.

You must complete a SoECAT if:

- you are applying for clinical research funding
- you will carry out your research in the UK
- your research will use NHS resources

- your research requires Health Research Authority approval

You must complete a SoECAT even if you don't think your clinical research will involve excess treatment costs (ETCs). You should contact an AcoRD specialist as early as possible in the application process and the SoECAT form should be signed off by an AcoRD specialist before submission.

If we award you a grant you must tell your AcoRD specialist. In England, very expensive ETCs may need further assessment by an NHS panel.

Further details <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/researchers/i-need-help-costing-my-research/> and <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/online-soecat-guidance/30396>

12. Supporting publications in press

Name the file as 'surname_publication#'

A maximum of two publications. Use short file names to avoid errors.

13. Confirmation of additional resources

Name the file as 'surname_resources'

If your fellowship requires access to additional resources e.g. additional salary support or consumables provided by other sources provide a letter from the grant holder or relevant budget holder confirming those resources will be available to support the fellowship.

14. Other supporting documentation

Other supporting documentation (such as pilot data) may be included providing it is not more than two pages in total. This is intended to allow you to submit a document that is essential to understanding your project and not simply an 'extension' to your protocol document.

List of files that we definitely DO NOT want in your application

x DON'T send multiple copies of each file

x DON'T send a covering letter unless you have an important point to address

x DON'T send a copy of your application for a Home Office licence or application for ethical approval

x DON'T send CVs for your supervisors

x DON'T send full economic cost documents or other internal university/hospital research forms

x DON'T send volumes of extra information. We will not accept excessive additional information. Our external advisors have limited time to read applications.

Note about videos in applications.

Videos are discouraged due to problems with large file sizes and also because reviewers may not have the software to open the files. If a video is really needed then they should be brief, relevant and in a format that can easily be opened by most computers.

How to submit your signatures

The Excel finance file must be signed by the applicant, the Officer responsible for administering any award made (eg Finance Officer, Bursar, Registrar), your main Supervisor and the Head of Department where the research training is to be given.

We accept signatures **up to 2 weeks after submitting your web form**. We accept signature images in the uploaded Excel finance file or scanned copies of the relevant pages emailed to applications@action.org.uk.

Ideally, we would prefer to have all signatures on one page but if signatories are in very separate UK locations, we accept separate signature pages provided the name of the RTF applicant is clearly marked on the document. There is no need to re-send the whole application.

Who can sign as the Head of Department?

The person(s) responsible for the allocation of resources and staff for the project can sign as Head of Department. Typically, this would be the Head of Department but in some circumstances the acting Head of Department can sign.

What happens after your application has been received

Once your application has been submitted the Research Training Fellowship applicant will receive an email containing a PDF of your webform answers for your files. ***Please let us know if this email does not reach you as it may mean that the application has not been processed.***

Over the next few months Action Medical Research will carry out a full peer review process. We will contact the Applicant by email if further information is required. After external peer review applications will be shortlisted by our Scientific Advisory Panel. Candidates will be informed if they have been shortlisted at the end of January for interviews on **Thursday 27 February**. The final selection will be made on the advice of the interviewing panel drawn from the relevant scientific and medical advisers. We expect the success rate for full applications to be around 25 to 30%.

We are aware of the deadlines in early 2025 for acceptance of training places for later in the year and will endeavour to inform candidates before those deadlines if at all possible.

Fellowships must be started within one year of the award.

Assessment criteria

Proposals will be considered using the following criteria.

Suitability of the applicant for the fellowship:

- Track record and achievements to date.
- Expertise and skill set.
- Current research standing.
- Research outputs.
- Does the applicant have adequate research experience to undertake this work?
- Is the applicant at the appropriate career stage for this fellowship?
- Has the applicant played a significant role in the design of the project?

Potential for the future:

- Does their experience to date and career goals indicate the applicant is committed to a career in research/academic medicine in areas relevant Action's remit (and, if applicable, BPNA's remit,)?
- Is there evidence of leadership potential?

The value of the proposed training

- Will the fellowship support their long term scientific, clinical and career goals?
- Will there be opportunities for training and career development and development of leadership potential.

The suitability of the host research centre and research group:

- Scientific impact in the field
- Level of commitment from supervisors and host institution

The importance of the problem which this work seeks to overcome:

- Clinical relevance
- Is it close to clinical application?
- Relevance to the Action's (and, if applicable, BPNA's) interests
- The likelihood of scientific and/or medical advances in the short and long term relevant to relieving disease/disability burden and/or improving quality of life of children.

The scientific merits of the project:

- Strength of medical or scientific case including summary of previous research work that has been conducted in this area
- Level of innovation and whether this is likely to lead to significant new understanding
- Are the aims and objectives understandable and unambiguous, hypotheses are clearly defined.

The feasibility of the project:

- Is the plan ambitious but realistic for the time and skill level?
- Has a clearly written and transparent methodology been provided?
- Has preliminary data been provided?
- Has the applicant clearly set out and justified the following (these will be considered in detail at the full application stage):
 - Measures for avoidance of bias (e.g. blinding, randomisation)
 - Number of experimental and control groups and sample size per group
 - Is it clear how the number of study subjects required for the project will be recruited?
 - 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
 - Circumstances in which power calculations are not appropriate to determine sample size
- Have diversity and inclusion been considered in the study population? If not, is there a clear justification?
- Has the applicant considered any risks or difficulties associated with the project and has a risk mitigation plan?
- Is the plan to involve patients or members of the public appropriate to the planned research (more involvement being expected where the research is nearer to clinical application)?
- Is the support fully justified? Are there sufficient resources in place to support the fellowship?
- If the application involves the use of animals or animal tissue, is this (and the species proposed) justified in terms of the likely outcomes of the research and conforms to guidelines?
- Is the proposed research ethically acceptable?
- Are there any ethical issues that need separate consideration?

Action Medical Research Contact details

Email: applications@action.org.uk Phone: 01403 210406 and press 5 for Research
Office hours: Monday - Friday 9am to 5pm

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS/TROUBLESHOOTING

Login problems I've tried everything, and I can't get my password to work- what should I do?

- Please check that you are using this website
<https://actionmedicalresearch-applications.org.uk//fellowship/init.pl>
(This is not the main charity website).

- If you 'copy and paste' your password and your password is not recognised by the system, it may be some extra white spaces were caught on the end of the copy. Please try copy and paste again ensuring that white spaces are not included. The password is case sensitive if you prefer typing it in.
- If the issue is not resolved please contact us.

Calculating finances Should I use my current or future salary scale? Please calculate your finances in accordance with the salary scale that would be relevant at the time the research would start if awarded as this reflects the cost of the research to the charity. Your finance team will help, and they can include an estimate for nationally agreed cost of living awards if appropriate. A likely start date for awards from this round would be between April 2025 and October 2025.

What costs can I apply for? Two pages of detailed instructions about eligible costs are given on the first two pages of the excel finances sheet. Please scroll up to the top of the spreadsheet.

Uploading files Should I upload word files, Excel files or PDF files? Please send the finances file as an Excel file. Most other documents are usually submitted as Word or PDF files. Please don't submit multiple copies as different file types.