

MQ Mental 2024 Fellow's Award (USA)

Frequently Asked Questions

Many of these questions were submitted from the audience during the webinar [which can be viewed here](#). Some have been edited for clarity. Where duplicate questions have been submitted these have been summarised.

[You can view the full application guidance doc here.](#)

Timeline

Q: Is there a window of time the project must be initiated by or do all projects need to have a start date of **1st January 2025.**

A: We aim for the projects to have an early start date of **1st January 2025** - however we can offer some flexibility within the timeframe if there are extenuating circumstances. Applicants who wish to postpone the project start date beyond 1st January 2024 will need to request and justify this in their full application. The request will be considered on the condition that the start date does not extend beyond **May 2025**.

Host Institution

Q: Does the applicant have to be based at a host institution? What is the requirement for the host institution?

A: Applicants should be based at a host institution. The host institution can be a university, hospital affiliated to universities, or research institution in the USA.

The proposed host institution should ensure an adequate and supportive environment for applicants and the project. If successful, you and the named institution are expected to explain how the organisation will support the delivery of your project and your career development during the grant period in the full application.

Payments will be made directly to the host institution. We expect financial justification as per the terms and conditions of the award.

Q: Can an applicant change institutions during the assessment process (e.g. if current contract expires)?

A: Yes, applicants can change institutions during the assessment process. MQ recognises that it is often good practice for post-doctoral researchers to move between institutions and departments from the one that hosted the doctoral studies to expand their learning and development; however, this is not always possible/plausible given personal settings. As such, MQ welcomes applicants taking both routes in their development and research.

Q: Are letters of support from the host institution required at outline stage?

A: Letters of support and institutional approval are not required at the expression of interest stage.

Q: Is this a limited submission opportunity or can multiple applicants apply from the same institution?

A: No limit on no of applications from same institution.

Funding Application

Q: Would you be able to specify how much the salary will be? Does it depend on the institution?

A: The salary will be determined by the host institution and should include the base salary as well as additional salary costs including national insurance and pension contribution.

Q: Is this funding amount per year? Or the total for 36 months?

A: The funding amount of up to £225,000 covers the duration of the grant period and not per year.

Q: Can you please clarify what kind of overhead/indirect cost you do not fund - does it apply to any overhead costs requested by the university?

A: The host institution must cover all indirect costs, such as non-specific estimated costs. Estate costs (i.e. heating/lighting), office stationery, finance and HR (personnel) costs are not eligible for funding, even if it is standard practice for your institution to charge overheads to external grants. Salary-related costs including benefits, national insurance and pension contributions are covered and should be included as part of the salary costs.

Q: Will you be able to fund research assistant hour?

A: Yes, research assistant costs can be included in the budget.

Q: Can costs to fund a PhD student be included?

A: If it is salary support then yes

MQ Fellows Awards will provide funding over three years. Funds may be used for any of the following:

- Start-up funding for a specific project or transition funding for a current project
- **Salary support** (for the applicant or any research support staff e.g. research assistant)
- **Direct research costs** (e.g. research consumables, specialist equipment*)
- **Animal costs** (for the purchase, importation, housing and maintenance of animals, used in line with the [AMRC's position statement on the use of animals in research](#))
- **Travel costs** (e.g. visit to collaborators, project mentors and attending conferences)
- **Patient and public involvement costs**
- **Other costs** (e.g. high cost items or experiments e.g. gene expression, fees for external or internal services, publication costs)

(*relates to any equipment not found in a standard laboratory that is specifically required to complete this project)

The host institution, must be in the USA, must cover all indirect costs and overhead costs, such as non-specific estimated costs. Estate costs (i.e. heating/lighting), laptops and office stationery, finance and HR (personnel) costs are not eligible for funding, even if it is standard practice for your institution to charge overheads to external grants.

Q: Is the salary taxable or is it a non-taxable salary award?

A: Salaries are subject to income tax as per your country's laws and your host institutions contractual requirements. Your host institution will act as your employer throughout the award duration and so questions about your salary should be directed to your institutions HR team.

Q: Is there is a limit for salary? For example, an applicant who holds a lecturer position in the host university, which means this would be a bit higher than postdoc researcher.

A: There is no limit for the salary however they must be determined by your host institution. Shortlisted applicants are expected to justify the costs in the full application.

Q: Can costing for supervisors/mentors be included within the funding for this Fellowship (to protect/guarantee their time), or is that anticipated to be incorporated within their existing job roles?

A: Cost of the supervision and mentoring cannot be included as part of the grant budget and instead should be covered by the host institution.

Q: Does MQ allow for No Cost Extensions?

A: Yes, NCE's can be granted but will need to submit a request to MQ.

Q: How much flexibility is there for rebudgeting on the award (e.g., if an awardee receives another award with less flexibility)?

A: Whilst there is some flexibility, we do expect applicants to be fully committed to delivering their projects as agreed.

Eligibility

Q: What does 3-7 years of full-time equivalent research experience mean in terms of eligibility criteria?

A: We define post-doctoral research experience as any period spent in academic research after successful passing of a PhD or higher research degree examination.

If you spent time away from academic research (for example, maternity leave, sick leave, a break from academic career), you are still eligible to apply as long as you meet the eligibility criteria. The time away would not be counted as part of the post-doctoral research experience.

Q: Do applicants have to be US citizens, or can they just be based at a US institution?

A: There is no requirement for the applicant to be a US Citizen, however they must be based at a US institution, physically located in the United States of America. This could be a company, school, university, government agency, or any other kind of organisation.

Q: Are NIH K23 awardees eligible to apply?

A: Yes. This is a full-time Fellowship but Consideration for flexibility in terms of part-time involvement (FTE) and experience requirements.

Applications should be accompanied by a statement of support from the Head of Department of the host institution.

Q: Is a junior PI with 7-year postdoc experience and 2-year PI experience eligible?

A: MQ aims to offer as much flexibility on eligibility to support a diverse range of candidates and attract the best talent. we are unable to confirm if the panel will consider your career pathway as eligible or not. You are welcome to submit an expression of interest and make the case in more detail about the rationale for why you are applying

Q: Hi does the applicant have to be in the US during the whole assessment & review process? For example am I still eligible if have to be out of country for a few months?

A: Yes, as long as you are based at a US institution its fine if you are traveling regularly.

Application

Q: For the application of interest by the 10th of May, do we need to present an overview of the project, or is the project description only needed for the final application with the deadline of the August 2024?

A: You will be asked to provide an overview of the project at the expression of interest stage including a scientific abstract under the following headlines:

- Background
- Aims
- Methods
- How will the results be used?

Q: Is it possible to list papers in progress/ in press?

A: Papers in progress or in press are accepted and can be listed in the publication section.

Q: For the expression of interest, do we need to have a supervisor confirmed?

A: The supervisor does not need to be confirmed at the expression of interest stage. The supervisor should be proposed at the full application stage and is expected to provide support letters as part of the full application.

Q: Is there any template or requirement (e.g. page limit) for the expression of interest? What is the word limit for each section?

A: You'll need to submit your application online using our Grants Management System, Flexi-Grant® via <https://mq.flexigrant.com/>. To access the application form, you need to register on the Flexi-Grant system, head to 'My Account', 'My Applications' and start the 'MQ Fellows Award 2024 USA'. There is no page limit for the expression of interest. Word limits are indicated in the relevant sections of the application form.

Q: How precisely do we need to indicate the financial costs? For instance, would rough estimates be sufficient?

A: For the expression of interest stage, the budget should be completed by the applicant in consultation with the finance team (if possible). You would need a rough estimate of the salary costs, direct, and other research costs at this stage. The detailed cost breakdown will be needed for the full application.

Q: What is the time frame in between submitting the expression of interest and finding out if you've been shortlisted?

A: The expression of interest applications will close on 10th May 2024 and applicants will be notified of the review decision by June 2024.

Q: When showing the initial interest in the form, how much detail would you look for?

A: Please refer to the full guidance and instruction provided in the application form for guidance on how to best complete the expression of interest form.

Q: What proportion of expression of interest applicants are to be chosen to submit full applications?

A: We have no way of knowing the number of expressions of interest applications we will be receiving. Therefore, it is impossible to say how many will be invited to submit a full application at this stage.

Q: Will there be feedback between outline and full application stage?

A: Due to the high number of expressions of interest applications, we are unfortunately not able to provide individual feedback to applicants at this early stage in the process.

If your expression of interest application is successful, feedback on your full application will be provided by the MQ research team, but please remember that all funding decisions made by the Funding Committee are final.

Q: Is there any guidance on the split of time which should be devoted to new research vs. training for example?

A: There is no limit or restrictions on the split of time devoted to new research vs training. The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate an adequate time commitment to the research, and to allocate sufficient time and resources for training.

Q: Is the expression of interest stage designed to give you an idea of the total number of applications or is it a filtering step? In other words, can one not be invited to submit a full application after the expressions of interest are reviewed?

A: The expression of interest stage is a shortlisting stage where applications will be internally validated and then reviewed and shortlisted based on the assessment criteria. Only shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full application.

Q: Should I disclose my neurodivergence in the application? Do you include any adjustments for neurodivergent researchers?

A: You are not required to declare but are welcome to. If there are specific requests for adjustments, these can be made as part of a declaration and will be considered by the panel. MQ is an inclusive funder and welcomes applications from neurodivergent applicants and will offer adjustments wherever possible.

Patient and Public Involvement

Q: Can you please talk more about what patient and public involvement looks like?

A: It can include study design, analysis, dissemination. Involving people with LE can ensure you are asking the right questions, in a sensitive way and communicating the findings in appropriate language.

Q: To what extent can funding for the Fellows Award be used in terms of PPI? Specifically, I am thinking about direct recompense to carers and those who use services in relation to their time and input in developing the research approach and discussing the research findings - to be meaningful, I would like this to go beyond an 'advisory capacity' into something more genuinely partnership based, but people involved with PPI should be appropriately recompensed for their time and effort?

A: We encourage payment and recognition of patient and public involvement. It is important to have a clear policy on payment and recognition before involvement and, if possible,

involve public contributors as well as finance teams in the budgeting process. There is payment guidance available online which could be referred to when making this decision. <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/payment-guidance-for-researchers-and-professionals/27392>.

Q: How can you involve patient and public engagement in basic neuroscience? That seems like it would eliminate any basic neuroscience proposals.

A: We acknowledge that basic neuroscience is not a public facing discipline, and that patient and public involvement can be challenging. However, public contributors can be involved in basic neuroscience research at different stages including study design, analysis, and dissemination. There are resources available to researchers on how to involve public contributors in basic research.

Below are a few of these resources:

- <https://www.bna.org.uk/resources/pe-resources/>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8420886/>
<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/ppi-patient-and-public-involvement-resources-for-applicants-to-nihr-research-programmes/23437>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6192439/>
- <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/funding-for-researchers/patient-involvement-toolkit-for-researchers>

Q: Is increasing patient and public activities across the Fellows Award acceptable (with co-design happening within the scholarship itself)?

A: We expect proposals to demonstrate how you will embed patient and public involvement in your research through genuine partnership with patients, carers, and/or the public in design, delivery and dissemination of research, and we encourage applicants to consider how they will incorporate patient and public perspectives in their proposed projects. MQ will also support awardees in embedding patient and public involvement in their research through genuine and meaningful partnership with patients and the public in design, delivery and dissemination of research.

Q: Is there a recommendation of appropriate recruitment for PPI?

A: There are online resources available to support you in the recruitment of public contributors.

The following is a useful resource from NIHR: <https://oxfordbrc.nihr.ac.uk/ppi/ppi-researcher-guidance/ppi-in-practice/>.

Fellows Award

Q: How many grants will be awarded in this cycle?

A: We have committed to a minimum of 4 awards in this call.

Q: What proportion of expression of interest applicants are to be chosen to submit full applications?

A: We have no way of knowing the number of expressions of interest applications we will be receiving. Therefore, it is impossible to say how many will be invited to submit a full application at this stage.

Q: Why are you only focused on applications from the USA?

A: This is the first time MQ has limited applications to a specific territory. We had done so due to funding restrictions from funding partners.

Q: What are the expectations and requirements for reports, feedback to MQ, and evaluation following the research fellowship award?

A: Regular reporting is required, every 6 months progress report and finance report will need to be submitted as well as an end of award report.

Q: Are you supportive of research that deals with mental health challenges that may not be considered pathological (i.e. climate anxiety), and those that might be best treated outside of the biomedical model, for instance, through psychosocial support, community care, task-shifting, etc, (with an eye out for when a person should be triaged to clinical care)?

A: We are open to them. The review panel are particularly looking for impactful research that has the potential to change lives.

Q: Are there any recommendations for proposals using translationally relevant animal models?

A: Given applications will be received from the USA, all research must comply with applicable local and/or national regulations/laws and meet an equal standard established by the following UK guidance documents including animal rights guidance .