



Mental
health
research

Frequently Asked Questions

MQ Fellows 2025-2026

Useful Links

- **Programme page:** [MQ Fellows Award](#) – includes guidance documents and application link.
- **Full guidance document:** [Fellows Guidance \(PDF\)](#)
- **Webinar recording:** [MQ Mental Health Research – YouTube](#)
- **Expressions of Interest (EOI):** Open **3 November 2025** and close **12 December 2025**. Applications submitted via [Flexigrant](#) once open.
- **Contact the Grant Team:** Grants@mqmentalhealth.org

Eligibility & Research Experience

Postdoctoral Research Experience

Q: I am a lecturer and completed my PhD more than 10 years ago; am I eligible?

A: MQ defines postdoctoral research experience as any period spent in academic research after successfully completing a PhD or higher research degree examination. If you completed your PhD more than 10 years ago and have been continuously active in research, you would not be eligible. However, if you can demonstrate significant career breaks or unusual circumstances that mean your effective postdoctoral research experience is closer to the 3–7 years range, you may still be considered.

Q: If a researcher is in their 1st year postdoc but has 10+ years of prior research experience, are they still eligible?

A: If you are in your 1st year postdoc, you do not meet the standard threshold, even with extensive prior research experience. However, under the flexibility/exceptions clause, you may be considered if you demonstrate:

- At least 12 months of postdoc experience by the relevant deadline
- Strong evidence of research independence
- A supportive institutional environment to foster your development.

Q: I completed my PhD in 2013, returned to clinical work in 2014, and resumed full-time research in 2023. Can I apply?

A: Yes. MQ Fellows Award eligibility is based on active postdoctoral research experience. Career breaks or time away from research (such as full-time clinical practice, parental leave, or health leave) do not count toward the 3–7 years window. In this case, your effective postdoctoral experience would be counted from 2023 onward, making you eligible, provided other criteria are met.

Q: *Can a Fellow with more than 7 years' postdoctoral experience, currently an Assistant Professor, hire a research fellow as part of the award?*

A: Applicants with over 7 years' postdoc experience are generally ineligible. Under the flexibility clause (e.g., career breaks), the Fellowship can fund research staff, including fellows, if included in the budget and aligned with MQ guidelines.

Q: *Would a DClinPsy graduate with primarily clinical training but some research involvement be eligible?*

A: Yes. A DClinPsy counts as a higher research degree, so the postdoctoral research clock starts from its completion. However, eligibility requires that you have accumulated at least 3 years of postdoctoral research experience. Predominantly clinical experience without significant research activity may not meet this threshold.

Q: *Can a fresh PhD graduate apply if they have substantial research experience prior to their doctorate?*

A: No. Eligibility is based on postdoctoral research experience (time since the PhD). Research experience prior to completing the PhD does not count toward the 3–7-year requirement.

Q: *Can the MQ Fellows project be collaborative with a senior researcher if the PI is within 3–7 years postdoc but previously had minimal research requirements?*

A: The project can be collaborative with a senior researcher. The primary applicant must lead the project, meet eligibility requirements, and will be assessed on their skills, potential, and independence, while collaborators provide additional expertise.

Q: *Is a researcher with a PhD in Psychiatric Social Work and 9 years of public mental health experience at a non-profit eligible?*

A: Eligibility is determined by years of postdoctoral research experience. If the years at the non-profit were primarily research roles undertaken after PhD attainment, this would count as postdoctoral research experience, with the clock starting after the PhD was awarded. If the experience was primarily non-research (e.g., program delivery, administration, clinical service), it would not count toward the 3–7 years eligibility window.

Readiness for Independence

Q: *How is readiness for independence assessed for applicants with less than three years' postdoctoral experience?*

A: Applicants must have at least 12 months (WTE) of postdoctoral research experience by November 2025 and provide evidence of readiness for independence. Indicators may include a clear, original research vision aligned with MQ's strategic priorities, leadership or co-leadership on research projects, a strong publication record, contributions to grant applications or awards, and a supportive institutional environment to foster independence.

Professional Qualifications & Career Stage

Q: *Can an MD with research experience but without a PhD apply?*

A: Yes. An MD with substantial, independent research experience can be considered equivalent to a research doctorate. The key is evidence of postdoctoral-level research experience and readiness to lead an independent project.

Q: *For the 3–7 years postdoctoral experience requirement, does the calculation begin at PhD completion or first job appointment?*

A: The 3–7 years window begins at the date the PhD (or equivalent degree) was formally awarded. However, time not spent in active research does not count toward this total.

Q: *What if I am promoted to Assistant Professor after applying but before award decisions are finalized?*

A: Eligibility is assessed at the time of application submission. A promotion afterward does not automatically disqualify you if you still meet the 3–7 years postdoctoral experience window.

Q: *Are there specific job titles that determine eligibility?*

A: No. Eligibility is determined by career stage (3–7 years postdoc), not job title. Applicants may be postdoctoral fellows, lecturers, assistant professors, or equivalent.

Funding & Awards

Funding Limits & Compatibility

Q: *Is there flexibility regarding the £100,000 funding exclusion criterion?*

A: The MQ Fellows Award generally considers applicants ineligible if they hold substantial funding that covers most of their research effort. However, partial funding (e.g., covering 40% of time) does not automatically exclude eligibility, particularly if other commitments such as teaching limit research time. Applicants should clearly outline current funding and time allocation.

Q: *Does the funding cap apply to past or current grants?*

A: The £100,000 limit applies to current substantial funding that covers most of your research effort. Past grants or smaller awards do not automatically preclude eligibility.

Q: *Can you apply if you are a co-applicant on other funding?*

A: Yes. Being a co-applicant on another grant does not exclude eligibility. The primary consideration is whether your current commitments allow you to dedicate sufficient time to the MQ project.

Q: *If a grant under review exceeds £100,000, does this affect eligibility?*

A: No. Grants under review do not automatically exclude you. If awarded before the

Fellowship starts, MQ will assess whether the combined funding would prevent sufficient effort on the MQ project.

Q: *Does the £100,000 funding threshold include direct and indirect costs?*

A: Yes. The limit includes both direct and indirect (FEC) costs. Applicants should account for the total funding that covers their research effort.

Q: *Are Career Development Awards (e.g., NIH K awards) compatible?*

A: Possibly. Applicants may apply if the MQ project is substantially distinct from the aims of the other awards and the awards provide less than \$100,000 per year. Any potential overlaps and funding allocations must be clearly described in the application.

Use of Fellowship Funds

Q: *If I become a consultant and the MQ Fellowship cannot cover my full salary, can I use the award for research costs only?*

A: Yes. MQ Fellowships are flexible regarding salary. You may secure salary support from other sources and use the MQ award for research costs, staff, consumables, travel, and other eligible expenses. Clearly outline this in your budget.

Q: *Does the £250,000 budget include salary?*

A: Yes. It can cover salary costs for the primary investigator and support staff.

Institution & Sponsorship

Host Institution Requirements

Q: *What qualifies as a “research institution”?*

A: This can include universities, university-affiliated hospitals, or recognized research organisations and non-governmental organisations with research capacity. An academic professorship is not required, but the host institution must provide resources and support for the Fellowship.

Q: *How should “based at an institution” be interpreted? Are fixed-term contracts eligible?*

A: Applicants must be hosted by an institution capable of supporting the Fellowship. Fixed-term contracts are eligible if the institution confirms support for the Fellowship duration at the time of the application.

Q: *Can I hold part-time roles at multiple institutions?*

A: Yes, provided eligibility criteria are met, and the host institution supports the Fellowship. The MQ award can cover the Fellowship portion of your salary and project costs.

Mentorship & Sponsorship

Q: *Is it mandatory to include mentorship activities?*

A: Mentorship is encouraged but not required. Applicants must have a sponsor at the host institution who provides support and confirms availability of resources. Including a mentorship plan can strengthen your application.

Q: *Can mentors be from different countries? Can mentor effort be budgeted?*

A: A broader mentorship team is encouraged, and mentors may be international. Mentor effort cannot be budgeted; the Fellowship primarily supports the applicant's research and project costs.

Research Focus & Scope

Q: *Are secondary data analysis projects eligible?*

A: Yes. Secondary data analysis projects are eligible as long as they are innovative, feasible, and have potential impact on mental health research.

Q: *Are interdisciplinary projects more favourable?*

A: Projects are assessed based on quality, originality, and potential impact. Interdisciplinary projects are encouraged when they clearly strengthen or enhance the research question.

Q: *Is there a minimum number of publications required?*

A: No. Eligibility is based on postdoctoral research experience, quality of research, and potential for independent research rather than a publication count.

Q: *Are projects outside the priority areas eligible (e.g., ADRD or mental health in aging)?*

A: Yes, if they demonstrate novelty, feasibility, and potential impact.

Q: *Is research involving psychedelics eligible?*

A: Yes, if it is ethically approved, safe, and relevant to mental health.

Q: *Does MQ support art or visual anthropology-based research?*

A: Yes, provided it addresses mental health outcomes and is scientifically robust.

Q: *Are public health or real-world implementation science projects eligible?*

A: Yes. Public health and real-world implementation science projects are eligible. There are no restrictions, as long as the research is relevant to mental health.

Collaboration

Q: *Can I collaborate with another university or work in a different country from my mentor?*

A: Yes. Cross-institutional and international collaborations are supported, if the primary applicant leads the project and meets eligibility requirements.

Q: *Is the MQ Fellows Award an individual or team application?*

A: The MQ Fellows Award is an individual application. The primary investigator must meet all eligibility criteria and lead the project. Collaborators are encouraged and may add expertise, but there are no co-PIs.

Application Process

Q: *Can I see the Expression of Interest (EOI) form before the call opens?*

A: The EOI form will only be available once the call opens on 3 November 2025. However, reviewing the guidance documents in advance is recommended, as they include application instructions and can help you prepare before the EOI goes live.

Q: *Is a detailed budget required for the EOI?*

A: A high-level budget is sufficient. Full detailed budgets are required for the full application.

Patient & Public Involvement (PPIE)

Q: *Should PPIE be considered in the application, or only after the award?*

A: PPIE should be considered from the outset, including during application. Applicants must show how people with lived experience will contribute.

Q: *Are there opportunities to involve PPIE in developing the application?*

A: Yes, but funding for PPIE activities is only available after the award. You can plan for PPIE contributions in your project budget.

Q: *Do PPIE contributors need to be named?*

A: No. You may budget for input from a panel or group without naming individuals. The key is to describe their contribution and involvement clearly.

Q: *Can applicants with no prior PPIE experience apply?*

A: Yes. MQ welcomes applicants new to PPIE, if they demonstrate a meaningful plan to involve people with lived experience.

Q: *Can you use secondary data analysis in a project with PPIE?*

A: Yes. PPIE can help prioritize research questions, interpret findings, and advise on dissemination, even if no new data is collected.

Fellowship Timeline & Feedback

Q: *What is the earliest start date?*

A: 1 September 2026.

Q: *Will feedback be provided at the EOI stage?*

A: Feedback is not provided at the EOI stage because it is a preliminary screening used to shortlist applicants for the full application. Detailed feedback is reserved for the full application review, when proposals have been fully developed and assessed.

Q: *Does the Fellowship open annually?*

A: The MQ Fellows Award opens every two years.

EMDR Stream Eligibility

Q: *Who is eligible for the EMDR stream?*

A: The EMDR stream is open to applicants based in the US and Canada who meet the general fellowship eligibility criteria and whose proposed project focuses on research into Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR). Applicants must demonstrate relevant expertise and a strong research plan.

Q: *Is prior EMDR research required?*

A: No. Applicants must develop and submit a project focused on EMDR. Prior experience is not necessary.

Additional Information

Q: *How many awards will be given?*

A: The aim is at least ten awards, including four dedicated to EMDR-focused projects.

Q: *Do international applicants need to spend time in the UK?*

A: No. Fellows can be based outside the UK, but if travel is planned, visa and relocation costs may be included in the budget.

Q: *Can researchers from low- and middle-income countries apply for this opportunity?*

A: Yes. The MQ Fellows Award is open to international applicants, including those from low- and middle-income countries.