

# MQ Mental Health Post-Doctoral Scholarship

(Pilot Scheme)

This pilot scheme is a postdoctoral level funding opportunity for newly qualified postdoctoral researchers who are within 2 years of completing their doctoral degrees, to support them in consolidating their PhD (or equivalent doctoral degree) and transitioning to the next stage of their research career.



## What are we looking for?

We will fund innovative and bold ideas and approaches that aim to improve our knowledge to better detect, treat, and prevent mental illnesses. The project could be basic, clinical, or public mental health research. It could look into biological, psychological, social, economic, cultural, or environmental factors behind mental illnesses and or could study how various factors interact with each other in mental illnesses.

We expect proposals to demonstrate how they will embed patient and public involvement in their research through genuine partnership with patients, carers, and or the public in design, delivery and dissemination of research.

<b>Career Level</b>	<p>Early-career, post-doctoral, or equivalent research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have been awarded a PhD (or equivalent doctoral degree) or have passed their viva voce (or doctoral examination) with minor amendments by the application deadline of 14 July 2023 <b>and</b> awarded doctoral degree by scholarship start date of 01 January 2024.</li> <li>• Have been awarded doctoral degree within two years of the application deadline of 14 July 2023.</li> </ul>
<b>Research Area</b>	Basic, Clinical, and Public Mental Health
<b>Host institution</b>	<p>Anywhere in the world except for institutions that are based in countries which are under UK financial sanctions:  <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-sanctions-regime-specific-consolidated-lists-and-releases">https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-sanctions-regime-specific-consolidated-lists-and-releases</a></p>
<b>Funding Period</b>	12 to 24 months
<b>Funding Amount</b>	Up to £95,000

## Encouraging Representation

We welcome applications irrespective of the applicant's sexual orientation, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, nationality, faith and religion, disability, and age. However, as racially marginalised groups, women, researchers with disabilities, researchers from low-income or middle-income countries (LMICs), and members of the trans community are currently under-represented across research funding, we would encourage applications from members of these groups.

*Appointment will be based on academic merit and availability of funding*



## Demand Management

To boost success rates for shortlisted applicants (i.e. applicants who will be invited to submit a full application) and to work towards providing this opportunity across a range of institutions, full submission invitations will be limited to a maximum of three applicants per host institution.

### All applicants must:

- 1 Contribute between 50 and 100% Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) for this scholarship for period of up to 24 months (between 01 January 2024 and 31 December 2025). We support applicants applying on a part-time or flexible working basis as long as it is approved by the host institution.
- 2 Identify a host institution which will act as their employer for the duration of the award. Host organisations hosting the MQ scholarship must be able to provide the applicant with a contract of employment for the duration of the award.
- 3 Have one academic supervisor based at the named host organisation where the research is held. The supervisor should be proposed in the full application, should be a senior academic who will provide support in the form of using networks, expertise, and influence to advocate for the awardee's advancement and provide them with practical help for the duration of the award. The supervisor is ideally not the applicant's previous PhD Supervisor (only in exceptional circumstances and with full justification in the application). The supervisor will be asked to provide support letters as part of the application.



## Retain talent in the field:

**MQ's flagship Fellows programme has, for the last 10 years, helped to retain and grow talent within mental health science. Our MQ Fellows go on to secure on average \$5 of further funding for every \$1 we invest, ensuring their work and impact continues to grow. This statistic is the quantitative evidence of MQ's investments achieving their aim in launching the careers of the best researchers and retaining them in the field.**

Dr. Joshua Roffman is one such example. His high-risk high-reward study has attained critical proof of concept, successfully demonstrating that prenatal exposure to folic acid alters brain development in ways that appear to protect against the development of schizophrenia. Fundamentally, he showed that folic acid fortification is an effective way to achieve these results across the population. This striking discovery yields colossal potential, paving the way towards prevention of this complex and debilitating disorder. After publishing what became the most highly viewed paper in JAMA Psychiatry in 2018, Joshua was recognized by the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation for spearheading one of the most important findings for that year.

The work funded by MQ led to a change in the direction of not only Joshua's research but also of a significant number of his fellow scientists, who have joined together to focus on prevention measures through a multi-disciplinary group.

Joshua is now leveraging these important findings with \$9 million in new grants to address broader questions around other prenatal and early life interventions that can offer protection against risk for serious mental illness, improving understanding of mechanisms of disease, to support development of better treatments.

**This pilot Scholarship programme will build on the success of MQ's Fellowship programme and help to further nurture talent within mental health science.**

## How to apply?

### *Expression of Interest*

All applicants are expected to complete an online expression of interest by **14 July 2023 16:00 (UK time)**.

### *Full Application*

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit an online full application by **14 September 2023 16:00 (UK time)**. Full applications will be reviewed by Funding Committee. The Committee will include representatives from a range of mental health disciplines, alongside people with lived experience of mental illness.

## What do we fund?

**This pilot scheme will provide funding of up to £95,000 (GBP) for a period of 12 to 24 months. Funds may be used for any of the following:**

- **Salary support** *for the applicant*
- **Direct research expenses**
- **Travel and subsistence costs**
- **Training and development costs**



**This statistic is the quantitative evidence of our investments achieving their aim in launching the careers of the best researchers and retaining them in the field.**

Dr. Joshua Roffman



**Webinar**  
29/30 June 2023

**Expression of interest opening date**  
30 June 2023

**Expression of interest closing date**  
14 July 2023

**Full application opening date**  
26 July 2023

**Full application closing date**  
18 September 2023

**Peer review**  
September to October 2023

**Award start date**  
01 January 2024

## How will applications be assessed?

The Funding Committee and external reviewers will assess the applications based on:

- 1 Skills and potential of the applicant** to undertake the proposed project as shown by career stage, highlighted achievements, support statements, research outputs, future research vision, recognition and awards
- 2 Potential for independence** as shown by adequate sponsorship, novelty and distinction of proposed research in relation to previous projects, and collaborations.
- 3 Quality and originality of the proposed project** as shown by originality in relation to research already in the field, importance, suitability of the methodology proposed, feasibility of the research (methodology and timescale), and scientific soundness of the proposed project and/or approach.
- 4 Research environment** as shown by access to adequate infrastructure, expertise, and support
- 5 Patient and public involvement** as shown by the relevance of the proposed work to the needs of patients, the public, and carers, feasibility, and demonstrated knowledge or interest in involving patients and the public in all stages of the research process



## Webinar

**Please register to attend our webinar on 29 June 2023 at 14:30**

**The programme team is happy to respond to questions regarding the call, please contact us at [scholarship@mqmentalhealth.org](mailto:scholarship@mqmentalhealth.org)**



**For more information please contact  
[grants@mqmentalhealth.org](mailto:grants@mqmentalhealth.org)**



**[www.mqmentalhealth.org](http://www.mqmentalhealth.org)**

MQ: Transforming mental health is a company registered in England and Wales (Co number 7406055) and a charity registered in England and Wales (Charity number 1139916) and Scotland (SC046075).

