Frequently Asked Questions

Eligibility

Q: My doctoral examination is scheduled after the application deadline of 14th July 2023. Am I still eligible to apply?

A: To be eligible for the MQ Post-Doctoral Scholarship applicants should:

- 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 14th July 2023, and awarded their doctoral degree by the scholarship start date of 1st January 2024. A successful pass means either no correction needed on the thesis or only minor corrections required.
- Have been awarded their doctoral degree within two years of the application deadline of 14th July 2023.

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 2024.

A: We aim for the projects to have an early start date of 1st January 2024 - 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 March 2024.

Q: If someone gets a lectureship but they are still under 2 years from PhD are they eligible?

A: Yes, if someone gets a lectureship and are still under two years full-time equivalent postdoctoral research experience, they are eligible to apply for the scholarship.
Q: **What does two 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.

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Q: **Are people with a Master of medicine or medicine degrees in Psychiatry eligible for this scholarship?**

A: Yes, the eligibility is not restricted to researchers awarded a PHD. Applicants awarded any equivalent doctoral degree including but not restricted to PHD, DPhil, MMed, DClinPsy, MBBS, MD, are eligible to apply for the scholarship.

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Q: **Do you consider the point at which the PhD was passed to be the viva date or the date on the PhD certificate (when officially awarded after corrections made and confirmed)?**

A: Applicants should have passed their viva voce (or doctoral examination) with minor amendments by the application deadline of 14th July 2023 and awarded their doctoral degree (that is the PhD certificate) by the scholarship start date of 1st January 2024. (i.e. the MQ scholarship start date.) A successful pass means either no correction needed on the thesis or only minor corrections required.

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Q: **I haven't led any individual publications and my participation in conferences has been very low, can I still apply?**

A: Yes, you are eligible to apply even if you have not led individual publications or participated in conferences. We are mindful of the early career concentration of the scholarship and will consider the value of different research outputs, experience, and training.
Q: Is this funding just for scientists or can arts and medical humanities ECRs also apply?

A: The post-doctoral scholarship funding is for mental health researchers. However, MQ currently has a funding opportunity for researchers outside the field of mental health science including arts and medical humanities. You can find more information about this call through this link: https://www.mqmentalhealth.org/funding-opportunities/transdisciplinary-grants/.

Q: Would it be possible to give 40% FTE to the project if the other time is being used for clinical work and for caring responsibilities? (Working at 80% FTE overall)

A: We expect applicants to dedicate at least 50% full time equivalent for the scholarship. However, we are willing to offer flexibility if there are exceptional circumstances if this is explained in the application.

Q: Can I do a part-time on the project?

A: Applicants are expected to be able to contribute between 50 and 100% Full Time Equivalent (FTE) for this scholarship for a period of up to 24 months (between 1st January 2024 and 31st December 2025). We support applicants applying on a part-time or flexible working basis as long as it is approved by the host institution. We are willing to offer flexibility if there are exceptional circumstances if this is explained in the application.

Project Scope

Q: Will you be funding basic neuroscience aiming to reveal underlying mechanisms, circuitry, or mapping? These studies are not normally translational science, but the findings may be used to further lines of inquiry in translational science, eventually leading to clinical applications.

A: The funded project could be basic neuroscience. MQ has funded an array of neuroscience research through various funding programmes and recognises the importance and potential of this field in contributing to the translational cycle.
Q: Should the projects expand on our PhD research?
A: The scholarship can be related to the focus of your PhD or Doctorate and can build on your PhD experience. We encourage applicants to explain what new research they will carry out as part of this scholarship.

Q: Is the call open to studies on the general population, not only patients?
A: Yes, the call is open to studies on the general population and not only patients. Applicants are expected to demonstrate how their proposed research falls within the remit of the call, why this is a priority research area, and how it is relevant to the needs of patients, public, or carers.

Q: Should the application relate strictly to mental health or will substance use disorders fit under this remit? If substance use is not under the remit directly, is co-morbidity of mental illness and substance use ok?
A: Applications should have a mental health focus. Comorbidity between substance use and mental illness falls within the remit of the call. Applicants are expected to explain how their proposed research is aligned with the call remit.

Q: Would research involving meta-analysis be within the remit?
A: Yes, research involving meta-analysis is within the scholarship remit.

Q: Are systematic reviews allowed?
A: Literature reviews are allowed and can be integrated as part of the proposed research or as preparatory work.

Q: Can data be gathered from a country different from where the researcher resides? For example, if I am in the UK and I want to collect data in Ireland.
A: Yes, data can be gathered from a country different from where the researcher resides.
**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 anywhere in the world except for institutions that are based in countries which are under UK financial sanctions: [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).

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: Do you need institutional sign-off for the expression of interest application?**

A: Institutional sign-off is not needed for the expression of interest stage. Host institutions will be required to approve the full application through the Flexi-Grant application portal.

**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: Can you be split between two institutions? E.g. expertise in multidisciplinary environments.
A: Yes, awardees can conduct their research in multidisciplinary environments and across institutions. However, payments can only be made to one host institution who will be contracted.

Q: Can the mentor/ supervisor be someone who is a Chancellor fellow?
A: The requirement is for the supervisor to provide support in the form of using networks, expertise, influence to advocate for the awardee’s advancement, and provide them with practical help for the duration of the award. The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate that this support will be available to them in the full application.

Q: Can I work with my previous PhD supervisors? Like as a mentor to supervise the post-doc project.
A: The supervisor is ideally not the applicant’s previous PhD supervisor. However, we are willing to consider this in exceptional circumstances and with full justification in the application. You would need to demonstrate why your PhD supervisor would be best suited to provide support to you for the duration of the award.

Funding

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 24 months?
A: The funding amount of up to £95,000 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?

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: 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 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 scholarship (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: Is it possible to ask for part of a salary cost, if the majority is being paid for from a different source?
A: Yes, the applicant can opt to cover part of the salary cost through this scholarship while covering the remaining amount from an external source.

Q: Is it possible to apply for 24 months but only 1.5 years of salary, as I still have a half year contract from Jan 2024, but I could start the project.
A: Yes, a proportion of your salary can be covered by another contract.
Q: If my PI has a running grant that I can leverage to ask my own question, would that be ok or is it that I cannot use my mentor’s resources such as RAs, recruitment etc?
A: Applicants and awardees can leverage existing external grants and resources for the scholarship.

Application

Q: For the application of interest by the 14th of July, 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 18th of September?
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 Post-Doctoral Scholarship 2023 Expression of Interest Application’. 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 14th July 2023 and applicants will be notified of the review decision by 25th July 2023.

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: As this is a pilot scheme and 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 invites 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: To what extent can funding for the scholarship 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. 

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.bna.org.uk/resources/pe-resources/)
- [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8420886/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8420886/)
- [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6192439/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6192439/)
- [https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/funding-for-researchers/patient-involvement-toolkit-for-researchers](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/funding-for-researchers/patient-involvement-toolkit-for-researchers)
Q: Is increasing patient and public activities across the scholarship 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/ppo-ppo-researcher-guidance/ppo-in-practice/](https://oxfordbrc.nihr.ac.uk/ppo-ppo-researcher-guidance/ppo-in-practice/).

Q: A patient recruitment carried out could be difficult to complete in 12-24 months. Would you consider pilot studies?

A: Yes, pilot studies are suitable for the scholarship.

The Scholarship Programme

Q: How can we find previous awardees to reach out to?

A: This is a new funding programme from MQ so there are no previous scholarship recipients.

Q: Do you anticipate running this award again next year?

A: This is pilot scheme, if successful we might run it again in the future. Please sign up to our Research Roundup to learn about our upcoming funding opportunities: [https://www.mqmentalhealth.org/our-work/](https://www.mqmentalhealth.org/our-work/).
Q: How many grants will be awarded in this cycle?
A: In this pilot year, we have committed to a minimum of six awards in this call.

If you have further questions that have not been answered in the webinar or the guidance document then please contact scholarship@mqmentalhealth.org