



Mental  
health  
research

# **MQ Mental Health Research Fellows Award 2025-2026**

**Guidelines for Applicants**

# Contents

|                                                        |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Summary                                             | 3  |
| 2. The Funder: MQ Mental Health Research               | 3  |
| 3. MQ Fellows Award                                    | 3  |
| 4. Project Scope                                       | 3  |
| 5. EMDR Fellowship Stream (USA & Canada)               | 4  |
| 6. Who Can Apply?                                      | 6  |
| 7. Additional Information                              | 6  |
| 8. Key Dates                                           | 7  |
| 9. What is Funded?                                     | 8  |
| 10. Review and Selection                               | 8  |
| 11. Feedback                                           | 8  |
| 12. Our Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion | 9  |
| 13. Application Guidance Notes                         | 9  |
| 14. Contact Information                                | 10 |



MQ Mental Health Research is a registered charity in England and Wales (1139916) & Scotland (SC046075) and a company (7406055)



MQ is part of the Association of Medical Research Charities

## 1. Summary

This document is intended to guide applicants through the preparation and submission process for the Expression of Interest Application to the MQ Fellows Award Programme.

**Deadline for Submission: 14:00 (GMT), 12th December 2025.**

All applications must be submitted in full and approved by all required signatories by the stated deadline. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

Applications must be submitted through MQ Mental Health's **online application portal**. Paper applications or email submissions will not be accepted. A link to the form will be available when the call opens.

We strongly recommend preparing your application well in advance to allow for internal review and approval processes at your host institution. Please also submit your application ahead of the deadline to allow time to resolve any technical issues that may arise.

If you have any questions, or require support during the application process, please do not hesitate to contact the MQ Research Team: **grants@mqmentalhealth.org**.

## 2. The Funder: MQ Mental Health Research

MQ Mental Health Research (MQ) is a global mental health research charity dedicated to transforming mental health through rigorous, impactful science. We fund and champion high-quality research aimed at improving the detection, treatment, and prevention of mental illness. Our work supports talented researchers at all stages of their careers, with a focus on tackling long-standing inequalities, promoting innovative and impactful studies, and ensuring that people with lived experience are meaningfully involved throughout the research process.

## 3. MQ Fellows Award

MQ is inviting applications from early career postdoctoral researchers working across all disciplines within mental health science for its Fellows Award programme; MQ Mental Health's flagship grants programme supporting the most promising early-career scientists from around the world.

The Fellows Award is designed to ignite bold, innovative research with the potential to drive transformative change in mental health. Launched in 2013 as MQ's first major funding initiative, the programme has since become a cornerstone of our mission. Our Fellows alumni continue to make lasting contributions across disciplines, institutions, and geographies. You can learn more about the MQ Fellows Award **here**.

The Fellows Award offers you the opportunity to:

- Expand your research expertise and technical skillset;
- Build and showcase a strong research track record;
- Effectively communicate your research findings to diverse audiences;
- Expand your professional network within the field;
- Build the confidence and expertise to run your own research programme;
- Prepare competitive applications for future fellowships and grants.

## 4. Project Scope

We welcome bold, innovative ideas and approaches that seek to advance our understanding of mental illness in order to improve prevention, detection, and treatment. Projects may span basic/biomedical, clinical, or public mental health research, and we encourage applications from all disciplines relevant to mental health science.

Building on the recommendations from the **Framework for Mental Health Research**, **Gone Too Soon Paper**, the **Lancet Commission on Multidisciplinary Research Priorities for the Covid-19 Pandemic**, **Mental Health and the Internet Report** and **Mental Health Research Goals (2020-2030)**, we particularly encourage applications into the following areas or populations:

### **Mental health of children, adolescents, and young adults**

Including, but is not limited to, research focused on early identification and prevention, improving access to care

and ongoing support, and the development of age-appropriate interventions. We are particularly interested in studies addressing the use of digital technologies in youth mental health, co-morbid mental and physical health conditions, and the design of integrated and transitional care pathways that support continuity from child to adult services.

### **Digital and emerging technologies in mental health**

Including, but is not limited to, research focused on impact of digital tools such as mobile apps and online platforms, the development and evaluation of digital therapeutic interventions, and the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in diagnosis, treatment personalisation, and clinical decision-making. Proposals may also address key challenges such as data privacy and ethical considerations, integration of new technologies into existing mental health systems, and the use of Internet of Things (IoT) devices and wearables for continuous monitoring and early intervention.

### **Eating disorders**

Including, but is not limited to, research on early identification, prevention strategies, and diagnostic pathways; improving equitable access to effective, evidence-based treatments; and investigating which therapeutic approaches deliver the most sustainable, long-term outcomes.

### **Suicide and self-harm**

Including, but not limited to, research on protective factors that reduce suicide risk, the impact and mechanisms of social media use related to suicide and self-harm, and trajectories of self-harming behaviour across the lifespan. This also encompasses investigation into physical health comorbidities and multiple co-occurring conditions. We particularly encourage studies that improve early identification, inform targeted prevention strategies, and advance understanding of risk and resilience in diverse populations to enhance outcomes and reduce disparities.

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.

MQ will prioritize projects with the strongest potential to advance knowledge, patient value and translation potential.

## **5. EMDR Fellowship Stream (USA & Canada)**

As part of the MQ Fellows Award Programme, MQ is pleased to offer a dedicated funding stream focused on Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy, supported by the EMDRIA Foundation. This stream is open to postdoctoral researchers with 3 to 7 years of experience, based in either the United States or Canada, with up to four awards available.

This EMDR Fellowship stream aims to strengthen and expand research capacity in EMDR Therapy within academic institutions across the U.S. and Canada, fostering a new generation of trauma-informed mental health researchers. The programme supports research that contributes to the evidence base required to inform international clinical treatment guidelines, while also promoting translational impact and knowledge exchange.

### **Research Focus**

The EMDR Fellowship stream will focus exclusively on research in the following two mental health areas:

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Depression

Both topics may be addressed across the lifespan, and applications are encouraged to explore these conditions in a variety of contexts and population groups.

For the PTSD theme, we are particularly interested in research focused on the following priority populations:

- Military personnel;
- Veterans;
- Law enforcement and first responders;
- Children and young people;
- Civilian trauma survivors;
- Indigenous populations.

**What we are looking for:**

- Applicants must clearly articulate how their proposed research will advance understanding of the effective application of EMDR Therapy within one or more of the identified populations.
- Proposals should demonstrate critical engagement with theoretical, empirical, and practice-based frameworks, and include a robust R&D strategy. This strategy should:
  - Address gaps in the evidence base;
  - Advance methodological innovation;
  - Improve clinical utility;
  - Include a comprehensive and coherent dissemination plan across academic, clinical, and public audiences.
- Prior experience with EMDR is desirable but not essential.

**What we provide:**

An international panel of EMDR experts has been convened to support and guide the EMDR Fellowship Stream. This esteemed group includes experts from the United States, United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, the Republic of Ireland, Italy and Australia. This expert panel will provide comprehensive support across the lifecycle of the Fellowship programme, including:

- Ongoing research mentorship to selected Fellows, supporting high-quality project delivery;
- Support with research dissemination, including publication strategies and presentation opportunities;
- Ethics and IRB guidance, particularly for navigating relevant systems and procedures in the USA and Canada;
- Facilitation of academic partnerships and networks, both within the USA and Canada and internationally.

This Fellowship stream presents a unique opportunity for postdoctoral researchers to lead impactful, translational research and benefit from cutting-edge expertise, robust academic mentorship, and access to a rich international research community dedicated to advancing the field of EMDR therapy.

While this Fellowship opportunity is currently limited to researchers based in the USA and Canada, future rounds may expand to include international applicants as part of a wider strategy to build global EMDR research capacity and foster international, multi-centre collaboration.

## 6. Who Can Apply?

The MQ Fellows Award is open to researchers or clinical academics who meet the following criteria:

### Postdoctoral Research Experience

Have a minimum of three and no more than seven years of postdoctoral research experience by November 2025.

**Note:** Postdoctoral research experience is defined as any period spent in academic research after the successful passing of a PhD or equivalent higher research degree examination (e.g., DPhil, MD, or doctorate).

### Institutional Affiliation

Will be based at a university, hospital affiliated with a university, research institutes, or other independent research organisations located anywhere in the world, except those based in countries currently under UK financial sanctions. For the latest list, refer to: **UK Financial Sanctions**.

**Note:** Applicants to the EMDRIA Fellowship must be based in the United States of America or Canada.

### Research Ability

Applicants should demonstrate a strong record of productivity appropriate to their career stage, evidence of upward career progression, and clear plans to establish an independent research niche. They must show promising and exceptional research potential through a compelling track record and high-quality outputs.

### Fellowship Commitment

Are able to dedicate between 50% and 100% Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) to the Fellowship over a 36-month period, beginning on 1st September 2026 and ending on 31st August 2029.

### Other Funding Restrictions

Applicants who hold or are due to hold substantial research funding as a principal investigator (i.e. over £100,000/year in research support, excluding full economic costing [FEC] or indirect costs) are not eligible to apply for this Fellowship.

### Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional cases, MQ may consider applications from candidates with fewer than three years of postdoctoral

research experience (calculated as of the application opening date). To be considered under this clause, applicants must demonstrate strong evidence of early research independence and meet the following minimum requirements:

- At least 12 months (WTE) of postdoctoral research experience by November 2025
- A demonstrated independent research trajectory, evidenced by:
  - A clear, original research vision aligned with MQ's strategic priorities;
  - Leadership or co-leadership on relevant research projects;
  - A strong publication record;
  - Meaningful contributions to grant applications or awards;
  - Supportive institutional and supervisory environment to foster research independence.

Applications under this clause will undergo an initial eligibility screening. MQ reserves the right to decline proposals that do not meet the outlined threshold or fail to demonstrate sufficient readiness to undertake an independent fellowship.

### Application Limit

Only one application will be accepted per applicant for this funding call. If you have any queries about your eligibility for the scheme, please contact the research team via email at: **grants@mqmentalhealth.org**.

## 7. Additional Information

### Career Breaks

Time spent away from academic research (e.g., parental leave, sick leave, or career breaks) will not count towards the postdoctoral experience limit. Applicants returning from a break remain eligible, provided they meet the other criteria.

### Collaborations

We encourage research collaborations, particularly across disciplines, organisations, and geographical borders. Collaborators are expected to add value to the project by providing specific expertise, access to infrastructure and/or facilities. Details of collaborating partners contributing to the fellowship should be listed in the full application.

## Host Institution

The proposed host institution should ensure an adequate and supportive environment for the applicant 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. Host institutions will be required to approve the full application through the Flexi-Grant application portal. You are advised to give sufficient notice to allow for the host institution's administrative processes.

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

## Demand Management

To improve success rates and ensure equitable access across institutions, no more than three applicants per host institution will be invited to submit a full application following shortlisting.

## Sponsorship

All awardees are required to have one named sponsor for their Fellowship application, based at the host institution. The sponsor must:

1. Be listed in the full application;
2. Have relevant expertise in the proposed research area;
3. Be a senior academic who can provide support through their networks, knowledge, and influence to advocate for the applicant's development.

The sponsor will serve as a guarantor for the quality of the proposed research, the suitability of the applicant, and the standard of training and development to be provided by the host department.

They will be required to submit a letter of support as part of the full application.

Sponsors are not expected to request funding for their time or involvement in the Fellow's grant application.

## Responsibility for Host Institution and Principal Investigator

### Host Institution

By supporting a Fellowship application, the host institution confirms its formal approval of the proposal, including the roles, responsibilities, and resources requested. It also

agrees to the **Terms and Conditions** of the MQ Fellowship Award, if successful.

Institutional administrators are responsible for ensuring that:

- Salary and resource requests are appropriate for the proposed research;
- The project can attract and retain suitably qualified personnel;
- The budget represents value for money and supports successful delivery.

### Principal Investigator (PI)

The Principal Investigator will provide the intellectual leadership for the Fellowship project and take responsibility for its overall management and delivery. The PI serves as the primary contact for MQ throughout the application and grant period.

## 8. Key Dates

- Expression of Interest Opening Date:  
**November 3, 2025;**
- Deadline for Expression of Interest Submission:  
**December 12, 2025;**
- Shortlisting Notification:  
**February 2026;**
- Deadline for Full Proposal Submission:  
**April 3, 2026;**
- Deadline for Hybrid Video Response to Reviews:  
**June/July 2026;**
- Final Decision:  
**July/August 2026.**

## 9. What is Funded?

The MQ Fellows Award will provide funding of up to £250,000 (GBP) for a period of three years. Funds may be used for any of the following:

- **Salary** for the applicant and research support staff;
- **Direct research expenses** (e.g., consumables, equipment, data access and sharing, publication costs, open access charges, patient and public involvement, and dissemination.);
- **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 and subsistence costs** (e.g., fieldwork, visiting collaborators, project supervisors, and attending conferences);
- **Training and development costs.**

The host institution must cover all indirect costs and overhead costs, such as non-specific estimated costs. Estate costs (e.g., 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.

## 10. Review and Selection

Following the submission deadline, all applications will be reviewed for completeness and eligibility before proceeding to committee review. Eligible applications will then be evaluated by the MQ Fellows Funding Committee, with input from external reviewers as required.

The Funding Committee is composed of international experts, including:

- Academic and subject-matter experts from diverse disciplinary backgrounds within mental health science;
- Lived experience experts, including patients, carers, and members of the public who contribute valuable knowledge and insights drawn from their personal experiences with mental health challenges.

Applications will be assessed on:

1. **Applicant's Skills and Potential:** Applicants should demonstrate their suitability for the fellowship, a strong commitment to their research career, the capability to

successfully deliver the proposed project, leadership potential, and clear evidence of their capacity to establish an independent research career. Reviewers will consider the applicant's career stage and trajectory, key achievements, research outputs and awards.

2. **Quality and Originality of the Proposed Project:** Applicants should clearly demonstrate the originality of the proposed work, including how it builds on or diverges from existing research in the field. Reviewers will assess the scientific rigour of the project, the robustness and feasibility of the proposed methodology, the appropriateness of the timeline, and the overall significance of the research.
3. **Impact Potential:** The application should include a strong and well-justified rationale for the research, highlighting its potential impact within and beyond academia. Reviewers will consider the project's broader relevance to mental health, its scalability and ambition, and the strength of plans to disseminate findings to both academic and non-academic audiences.
4. **Patient and Public Involvement (PPI):** Applications should demonstrate the relevance of the proposed research to the needs of patients, carers, and the public. Reviewers will look for a clear plan to involve people with lived experience throughout the research process, and evidence of the applicant's understanding, experience, or intention to meaningfully and practically embed PPI into the project

## 11. Feedback

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. Feedback is based on a summary of the discussion that takes place during the panel decision meeting and the written assessment of the applications and does not include reasons why an application is or isn't funded.

## 12. Our Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

MQ is committed to equality of opportunity for all funding applicants and to fostering an inclusive research environment that promotes excellence through equitable practice. We are actively working to ensure that our funding processes embrace diversity of perspectives, identities, geographies, and research approaches. We welcome applications from individuals of all backgrounds, regardless of sexual orientation, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, nationality, faith or religion, disability, or age.

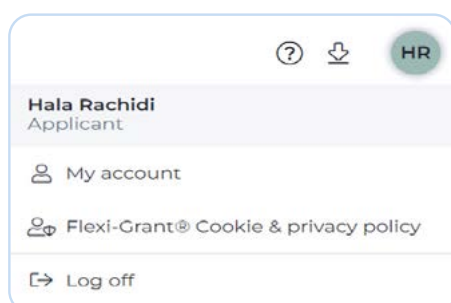
However, we recognise that certain groups remain under-represented in research funding, including racially marginalised communities, women, researchers with disabilities or long-term health conditions, researchers from low-income or middle-income countries (LMICs), and members of the trans and non-binary community. We therefore strongly encourage applications from individuals belonging to these groups. MQ will support researchers to work flexibly and in ways that accommodate their personal circumstances and wellbeing.

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

## 13. Application Guidance Notes

You will need to submit your application online using our Grants Management System, **Flexi-Grant®**.

To access the application form, you need to register with Flexi-Grant, head to 'My Account', 'My Applications' and start the '**MQ Fellows Award 2025 Expression of Interest**'.



As part of your submission, we require the following sections to be completed.

### Applicant Details

As the principal investigator, you will be asked to complete the following sections:

**Fellowship Stream:** select the Fellowship stream that best suits your application.

- General MQ Fellows Stream: Open to researchers in all mental health disciplines, based anywhere in the world;
- EMDR Fellowship Stream: Supported by the EMDRIA Foundation, this stream focuses specifically on Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) research. It is open only to researchers based in the USA and Canada.

**Applicant:** Please provide your current contact information. Ensure these details are kept up to date so we can contact you during the application process if necessary. Your email address will serve as your username on this system.

**Employment:** List all research positions held since the completion of your doctoral degree.

**Education and training:** Provide a list of university-level and professional education and training, including both completed and current qualifications, starting with your most recent qualification. You will also be asked to specify the date on which you were awarded or expect to be awarded your doctoral qualification (e.g., PhD, DPhil, DClinPsy, MBBS, MD, or equivalent). This should be the date the qualification was/will be awarded (after examination and corrections).

**Exceptional early career circumstances:** If you have fewer than three years of postdoctoral research experience, you will be asked to outline your exceptional circumstances. [Please refer to the section above for details.](#)

**Personal statement:** You will be asked to provide a personal statement describing i) your experience and background, ii) what transferable skills you plan to bring to this Fellowship, iii) what makes you an excellent candidate for this Fellowship, and iv) how this Fellowship will be transformative for your career.

### Project Overview

You will be asked to complete the following sections:

- Title of project;
- Duration of project;
- Proportion of time will you spend on this Fellowship;
- Financial support requested;

- Area of research;
- Research discipline.

### Scientific Abstract

You will be asked to provide a 500 word succinct summary of the proposal under the following headlines:

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

**Please note:** References and supplementary attachment are not included in word count.

- Full reference details must be provided, including author(s), publication year, title, journal name, volume, and page numbers;
- References should be numbered in the order they appear in the text and listed using Vancouver style, as outlined by the **US National Library of Medicine**.

### Patient and Public Involvement

You will be asked to provide a clear explanation of your project including background, aim(s) of research, design and methods used, patient and public involvement, and dissemination. This section will be aimed at reviewers that do not have specialist knowledge of your field.

Please do not cut and paste from other sections of your application form to create the plain English summary. Further guidance on **writing a plain English summary** is available on the NIHR website.

In line with **NIHR's** definition, when using the term 'patient and public' we include patients, potential patients, carers and people who use health and social care services as well as people from specific communities and from organisations that represent people who use services. Also included are people with lived experience of one or more mental health conditions, whether they're current patients or not.

We believe that patient and public involvement is important to improve the relevance and quality of research. It is important that our funding reflects the priorities and outcomes of patients, carers and people with lived experience of mental illness, and that their voice is heard throughout the research process. We therefore ask that you consider how your project is relevant to priorities of patients and public: for example, by addressing questions identified in published priority setting exercises such as the **James Lind Alliance projects**. We also ask that you consider how to best involve patients and public in your work. We encourage you

to refer to the **UK Standards for Public Involvement**.

### Grants, Awards, and Publications

You will be asked to list awards you have received for work or training, research grants you held in the past five years, and up to five most relevant and/or significant publications and conference papers.

Publications should be listed using the following format:

- Author's name (last name, initials);
- Year of publication;
- Title of article;
- Journal name;
- Volume number; and
- Page numbers(s);
- or DOI.

### Referee Suggestion

As part of your application, you will be asked to suggest up to three experts who could review your proposal. These referees should be familiar with your research abilities and experience but should not be closely associated with the proposed project or any related work. They must not be collaborators or co-applicants on any active or recent grants, nor have published with you in the past five years. Additionally, previous mentors or supervisors should not be suggested as referees.

Please note that while you may suggest referees, we cannot guarantee that these individuals will be contacted during the application review process.

### Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

MQ Mental Health Research is committed to being an inclusive funder supporting researchers from diverse backgrounds. You will be asked questions to monitor diversity. We encourage applicants to complete this section. Applicants can select the option of 'Prefer not to say'. This information will not be part of the funding decision and is only collected for analysing MQ's funding activities and trends.

## 14. Contact Information

Once you've read these guidelines, please contact us at **grants@mqmentalhealth.org** for any questions about our Fellows Award.



**Mental  
health  
research**



**MQ Mental Health Research is a registered charity in England and Wales (1139916) & Scotland (SC046075) and a company (7406055)**