

Guidance Notes for completion of the PhD-level Research Funding Application Form

Please reference each section of these guidance notes before completing the PhD-level Research Funding Application Form, as they provide more complete details of what information is required.

For further enquiries on any aspect of your application, or any issues relating to its submission, please contact Dr David Newton at david@meresearch.org.uk.

Please note that all funding awards are subject to ME Research UK's Standard Grant Conditions, which can be found at meres.uk/GrantConditions.

1. Project summary

Title: This should be descriptive.

Keywords: Please provide up to six keywords or phrases that describe your proposed research.

2. Principal applicant/supervisor

The principal applicant/supervisor will be responsible to ME Research UK in ensuring the conditions of the funding award are met, and must be based at a suitable host institution (e.g. university, hospital or recognised academic research institute).

3. Co-applicants

List anyone else involved in this application.

4. Institution where research will be conducted

This is the institution which will administer the studentship and, in most cases, where the majority of the research will be carried out.

5. PhD candidate, if known at application

Applications may include a named student, or students may be recruited by the host institution after an award has been made. If the student is known at the time of application, please provide their name and a statement from them (max. 250 words) outlining why they want to apply for an ME Research UK PhD studentship.

The supervisor should provide a statement (max. 250 words) addressing the following needs of the student:

- Induction, orientation and administrative support.
- Supervision, giving an indication of the frequency of meetings, setting of timelines, and provision of verbal and written feedback.
- Training opportunities, including both generic research and transferable skills.
- Environment, including group meetings, journal clubs and opportunities for ideas exchange.

6. Lay case for support

This section will be reviewed by lay people without a scientific or medical background, and should be in a form that they will be able to understand, and use non-technical language. The text may also be used by ME Research UK for publicity purposes. Each part should contain a maximum of 100 words.

Lay title: This should be concise and use non-technical terms as far as possible.

Lay abstract: Provide one or two sentences that summarise your research proposal.

Questions to be answered: Clearly outline the key questions you aim to tackle with this research and what you hope this will tell you.

Importance: Why is this research important, and how is it different to what has been done before? Why have you chosen to investigate this particular aspect of ME/CFS?

Relevance to ME Research UK: Explain the relevance of your proposal to ME Research UK's strategy and goals, which can be found on our website.

Potential for benefit to patients and increased understanding of ME/CFS: How will the outcomes of your research lead to clinical, patient and/or societal benefits, and what are the likely timescales? How will the findings have a direct impact on the quality of life of people with ME/CFS, or inform our understanding of the illness and direct future research?

7. Detailed description of research

Aims and purpose: State the primary hypothesis, and outline the aims and objectives of the research (max. 150 words).

Outline and brief plan of investigation: Outline the proposed programme of work, including clear work packages, methodologies and annual milestones (max. 1,200 words excluding references). The milestones will be the focus of annual reports on progress and determine payment of funding, in line with our Standard Grant Conditions.

Up to two supporting diagrams may be included as attachments (max. file size 10 MB each) but should not be embedded in this document.

This section should contain a detailed account of the research methodology, separated into work packages where appropriate, and sufficiently detailed to allow expert assessment. Please state the ME/CFS diagnostic criteria that will be used to select participants.

Please list all publications referenced in the application, including the full title, authors and journal details, and highlight in bold any by your own group or current collaborators.

8. Support requested

Please provide details of the stipend, capital equipment, consumable supplies and other costs required, and how these will be allocated between the three years of the studentship.

All applications must be denominated in pounds sterling (GBP). Where the host institution is not UK-based, it will receive the contracted funds at the local currency equivalent, at the exchange rate obtained by ME Research UK on the date of conversion. ME Research UK is not liable for any currency fluctuations or bank charges.

9. Supervision plan

This should be in place, and must be submitted along with your completed form.

10. Ethical requirements

If your research involves patients, service users, care professionals or volunteers, or their organs, tissue or data, approval from a research ethics committee will be required. If ethical approval is not required, please explain this in section 7.

The applicant is solely responsible for ensuring that all necessary ethical approvals are in place, and that the research is conducted according to the appropriate ethical standards. Please send us a copy of the approval letter when available.

ME Research UK does not currently fund projects involving animal experimentation.

11. Additional information

Please provide any additional information that you think should be considered when assessing your application.

12. Referees

Please suggest two independent referees.

13. Curriculum vitae of principal applicant/supervisor

Please provide sufficient information to support the application, particularly your previous experience in ME/CFS research, and in the specific areas to be covered in the proposed research.