

Guidance on Healthcare Related Fellowships at Southampton (UHS and UoS)

Introduction

The following information is designed to help decode some of the specific terminology, jargon and requirements for applying for research funding. This is not intended to cover every aspect of funding applications in depth but will highlight certain areas that may be new to you as well as those parts of the process that are necessary - and definitely should not be left to the last minute!

In addition, there are people employed by the [University of Southampton](#) and the [University Hospital of Southampton NHS Foundation Trust](#) who are here to help you with your application. We recommend contacting the appropriate team as soon as you can if you are considering applying for an award. Help and advice can be provided at every stage of the application, from your very first thoughts that you may just possibly be interested in research funding through to help with interviews and setting up contracts.

If we do not know about your application, we cannot help. Also, if the right teams are not made aware of your application at the appropriate time, your application may not receive approval from the University or UHS trust.

Contact Us: fmed-fellowships@soton.ac.uk

What is a Fellowship?

A fellowship is a personal award, designed to provide the recipient with the necessary support to establish or further develop themselves as a leader of the future. Fellowships enable you to devote most of your time to a program of activities to deliver your proposed research vision and act as an advocate for your field, whilst giving you time to develop your skills as a researcher and future leader.

Fellowship awards are typically highly competitive, and they are designed for outstanding people with the most potential to deliver the highest quality research. They will allow you to carve out your niche, establish your independence, develop new skills, and even build your own group. For some researchers, a new investigator grant may be more appropriate. You may find this comparison summary helpful in deciding which route offers the best option for you.

Further information is available on the University of Southampton Research and Innovation Services (RIS) site

- [Fellowships \(sharepoint.com\)](#) (University account required)

- <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/hr/services/visitors/index.page>

A Fellowship or a New investigator Research Grant

There are different mechanisms available to support early career researchers to develop towards independence. The main routes are via a fellowship or a new investigator grant. It is worth considering which option would provide the best route to achieve your long-term career goals.

- **Fellowships:** These are personal awards that aim to support individuals seeking to transition to independence through protected research time and a programme of research training and personal career development.
- **New Investigator Grants:** These support individuals seeking to transition to independence through their first grant as a Principal Investigator and with appropriate host institution support. The time spent on the research grant is combined with a portfolio of other activities such as teaching, time spent on other research grants, or clinical duties.

Further information on these options is available from RIS

- [Fellowship vs New Investigator Research Grant \(sharepoint.com\)](#) University of Southampton account required
- <https://www.southampton.ac.uk/hr/services/visitors/index.page>

Host Organisation (employer)

This is the organisation (such as University of Southampton, or University Hospital Southampton) where your award will be held. You can choose to be employed by either the Host Organisation or named Partner Organisation.

You may notice with certain applications that it is possible to have a host organisation that is not your employer. However, this is generally not recommended due to the various financial and administration requirements associated with research awards and employment. We recommend keeping your employing organisation and host organisation as one and the same. Speak to your research office (see below under '**RIS**' or '**UHS Trust R&D Office**') if you are unsure how this will work for you. Splitting your time across employers (e.g. part time at UHS Trust and part time at University of Southampton) is possible but needs to be checked and confirmed as financially viable with the faculty/school and finance departments.

One area of particular importance is salary. If you intend to change employer in order to hold an award you may find that your salary expectations cannot be guaranteed by the other organisation. For example, a senior consultant with limited research experience might only be able to claim a salary that is equivalent to the level of the research award which might be considerably lower. Also, you will need to consider whether or not you will be able to rejoin your current employer at the conclusion of the award.

Please speak with all organisations/departments involved to determine what options will be open to you and how these match your expectations.

Guidance on hosts from NIHR <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/what-to-consider-when-choosing-your-host-organisation-for-an-nihr-personal-award-as-a-clinicalpractitioner-academic/35249>

Information on pension contributions when looking at changing employer <https://www.bma.org.uk/pay-and-contracts/pensions/additional-pensions-advice/direction-status-nhs-pensions-for-non-nhs-organisation-employees>

Partner Organisation

This is an organisation that will be involved with the research project but is not the host organisation. For example, they may be a collaborator on one or more aspects of the project, or a trial site. If your fellowship allows you to continue with (and pays for) a proportion of your clinical time, you will need to list your clinical employer as a partner if they are not the host organisation.

If your clinical employer is also your host organisation but you will conduct research with a university or other research institution, they will be a partner organisation. Depending on the funder and particular scheme you may have one or more partners. The terminology is not consistent across funders so check the guidance carefully and speak with your research office if unsure.

Depending on the funder and scheme you may also be required to detail any organisation that is offering support to you or your project even if they are not collaborating directly with the research. For example, is another organisation providing laboratory space, machine time or expertise? Is an industry partner providing financial support or in-kind contributions? Again, requirements vary across funding schemes.

Industry partner

Industry partners are often seen as a benefit, and many funding schemes are happy for them to be included, but most funders will not allow funding to go to the industry partner. If you have an industry partner you may need to complete some extra forms. UKRI provide good guidance on industry

collaboration. <https://www.ukri.org/publications/mrc-industry-collaboration-framework-decision-tree/>

Research Sponsor

The sponsor is the individual, organisation or partnership that takes on overall responsibility for proportionate, effective arrangements being in place to set up, run and report a research project. They are responsible for the legal indemnity of the project. Any research involving the NHS (service users or staff) will require a legal sponsor. Sponsorship is also required for studies under the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research including trials that fall within the scope of the Clinical Trial Regulations.

The sponsor is usually the host organisation /employing organisation but this does not have to be the case. The sponsor is distinct from the funder of the research. Speak with your supervisor who will most likely have lots of experience and knowledge to advise on your requirements. You should also contact your research office.

Research involving patients and or the NHS

If your research project involves patients or NHS resources you will need to obtain further costings directly from the research office of the relevant NHS trust. An academic institution cannot cost on behalf of an NHS institution, or vice versa.

Your trial/project may also need to be registered with a clinical research network (CRN, now RRDN, see below). Your supervisor is the first person to contact in this regard as they should be able to advise and provide guidance on what is needed.

However, you may need the following:

Schedule of Estimated Costs Attribution Tool (SoECAT)

This is a template designed to support correct cost attribution at application for research cost funding, to ensure that full site-level research costs are recovered. If your research involves the NHS, public health or social care you will probably need a SoECAT. This essentially allows you to calculate the costs incurred by the NHS from your research. It is completed on-line.

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/online-soecat-guidance/30396>

NIHR Regional Research Delivery Network (RRDN)

In October 2024, the NIHR Clinical Research Network (CRN) became the **NIHR Regional Research Delivery Network**. The RRDN supports patients, the public and health and care organisations across England to participate in high-quality research, thereby advancing knowledge and improving care.

The RRDN can help to produce/approve your SoECAT. Please contact your local network for support.

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/study-support-service-contacts/11921>

South Central RRDN: sc.rrdn@nihr.ac.uk

Who are RIS (Research and Innovation Services)?

Research and Innovation Services (RIS) at University of Southampton consists of various teams able to assist across all aspects of the research lifecycle, such as grant writing advice, ethical approvals, sponsorship, contracts, public engagement, and REF. Research Funding Development, a team within RIS, supports academics with research funding and bid proposals including fellowships.

The Research Funding Development team can be contacted via funding@soton.ac.uk

[Research and Innovation Services](#) (University account required)

<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/hr/services/visitors/index.page>

Who are the UHS Trust R&D Office?

The R&D Central Office at University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust (UHS) provides research management and governance support for research projects involving our staff, resources or patients. The grants team assists health professionals in identifying funding opportunities, costing applications, contracts and budget management.

It is essential that any project involving UHS staff and resources is costed by the R&D grants team: researchgrants@uhs.nhs.uk

<https://research.uhs.nhs.uk/for-researchers/grant-funding-support>

Who are SoAR?

Southampton Academy of Research (SoAR) supports health professionals and scientists in Southampton to explore and pursue a career that incorporates health-related research.

[Home | SoAR \(soar-southampton.org\)](https://soar-southampton.org)

What is the NIHR Research Support Service (RSS) Southampton Hub?

[Research Support Service Hub delivered by University of Southampton and Partners | NIHR](#)

This hub provides a full range of support for the development of research funding applications, advice on setting up and delivery of research studies, and collaboration opportunities.

The hub is a collaboration between [15 units](#) who make up a team of highly experienced methodologists and researchers. Skilled research advisers provide support in many different methodological areas and contexts for applied health and care research, including public health research.

Additionally, access is available to other researchers, with national and international track records, through our Partner institutions and networks to support the development and delivery of high quality applied health and care research.

The hub co-hosts, and works closely with, the new [RSS Specialist Centre for Public Health](#).

Which Finance Team should I be liaising with?

Your substantive employer is usually, although not always, the lead institution who will work with you to coordinate your fellowship application. If this is UHS then please contact their R&D grants team (researchgrants@uhs.nhs.uk).

Should it be University of Southampton please contact the University Finance Research Hub. If your project includes resources other than your salary, please contact the appropriate institution. Each team will cost their own resources – UoS cannot cost UHS staff or facilities and vice versa.

Who are the Finance Research Hub

The University of Southampton Finance Research Hub (FRH) provides pre-award financial support for all externally-funded research grants and contracts, including fellowships. FRH can be contacted by email via the link below, but also via Worktribe (see below). FRH will assist you with the financial aspects of your application and are the first step in obtaining University approval for you to submit your application.

They are the most crucial component in any application; if your application is not financially viable (i.e. it will cost the University more money than it brings in) it is not likely to get approved. Please inform FRH of your application (ideally via Worktribe) as soon as you can.

[Research - Pre-Award \(sharepoint.com\)](#) (University account required)

<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/hr/services/visitors/index.page>

UHS costing

UHS and other NHS resources are costed by the UHS R&D grants team. You should contact the team at least 15 working days before the submission deadline.

<https://research.uhs.nhs.uk/for-researchers/grant-funding-support/support-with-grant-applications>

What is Worktribe?

Worktribe is the University of Southampton's system for managing grant and funding applications. It facilitates communication with those involved in developing a grant or fellowship application, including costings. If the University of Southampton is involved in an application for funding (whether as host or as partner), almost certainly a Worktribe record will need to be created. The Finance Research Hub and RIS can assist with this but please read the help pages first.

If you are external to the University but hold an email address ending in "@soton.ac.uk", hold a visitor contract or honorary contract you can request access to allow you to edit and/or create Worktribe records. This permission is granted on a case-by-case basis. The help pages below provide details on how and when this permission can be sought.

[What is Worktribe? \(sharepoint.com\)](#) (University account required)

<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/hr/services/visitors/index.page>

Peer Review

Peer review is a key stage in many successful fellowship applications providing invaluable feedback to enable an application to be enhanced prior to submission.

Within the University many faculties and schools run internal peer-review processes and some require evidence of peer review prior to final approval. Check with the relevant Associate Dean for Research or Deputy Head of School for Research about local arrangements.

Further information is available on the following SharePoint sites:

- Research and Innovation Services (RIS) - [Peer review](#)
- Faculty of Medicine - [Peer Review](#)
- School of Health Sciences - [Peer Review Policy and Form March 2022.docx](#)

University Approvals Process (in a nutshell)

- Submit on Worktribe 5 days prior to funder deadline
- Finance Research Hub initial approvals
- School/faculty academic approval
- Finance Director's approval (if over £1M)
- Final Finance Research Hub approval (check Worktribe record against funder application form). You will be messaged to inform you that you can now submit with the funder.

At any stage, the record could be returned to you for further work. Each stage requires one person from a limited pool of approvers to read and then approve your record before it moves to the next stage. The time to obtain all approvals (assuming there are no detected issues) can take anywhere from 5 minutes to several days depending on the availability of the approvers. Therefore, try not to leave submission to the last minute!

Some funders will send your submission to the Host Organisation's research office for final submission/approval. This will be the Finance Research Hub who will then provide the final submission. This is often not needed and is left solely to you to submit.

Types of Fellowship

Please note that funders may use different terminology. It is important to check what is appropriate for you at this stage of your research career.

Pre-doctoral Fellowship

A pre-doctoral fellowship supports people who are looking to start or advance a research career. Applicants will usually have completed an undergraduate degree in a relevant subject area. They may hold a relevant master's level qualification or be working towards one. Applicants without a master's level qualification may use certain fellowships to undertake a master's level qualification (e.g. a MSc, PGCert, PGDip, MRes or equivalent).

The MRC Pre-doctoral Clinical Research Training fellowship will fund the applicant to obtain a PhD.

Doctoral Fellowship

A doctoral fellowship supports individuals to undertake a PhD. The amount of funding offered can vary by scheme but generally they cover tuition fees, salary and research costs. Some schemes cap their funding while some schemes are open.

Post-doctoral / Advanced Fellowship

Post-doctoral or advanced fellowships support individuals who have already earned their doctoral degree and are looking to build an impactful research career. Many of these fellowships are aimed at early career researchers who have gained some post-doctoral research experience and are now looking to transition to independence, i.e. become the Principal Investigator of their own award.

Other fellowships

Bridging Awards

Bridging awards are used to help researchers who are near to or have reached the end of their current contract. They are usually small awards that will cover the researcher's salary for anywhere between a few months or up to a year. They may also come with a small amount of funding for research consumables. The aim of these awards is to provide the researcher with time to write applications for further funding. Some charities provide these awards but it is rare to find these being provided by the major research funders (e.g. UKRI, NIHR).

The NIHR Southampton Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) has funds available to support Pre and Postdoctoral Bridging Fellowships for internal candidates within the University of Southampton/University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Partnership.

It is expected that the bridging fellowship period will be used to generate data to support external fellowship applications, or to support those awaiting the outcome of an external fellowship application.

NIHR Senior Clinical and Practitioner Research Award

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) has developed a NIHR Senior Clinical and Practitioner Research Award. This new award is open to senior clinicians and practitioners who have previously obtained a PhD/MD and will provide between 20% and 50% protected time from within current roles to engage in research activities.

Further details from [NIHR Senior Clinical and Practitioner Research Award \(SCPRA\) Round 1 guidance notes | NIHR](#)

[BRC Predoctoral Bridging Fellowships | Southampton BRC](#)

[BRC Postdoctoral Bridging Fellowships | Southampton BRC](#)

Skills Development Awards

These are essentially like the fellowships previously described but with a focus on personal development and training rather than research. They will likely not fund research (although some may allow some research if it is part of training/development). These awards are usually shorter in duration than research fellowships lasting up to a year but this does vary by scheme. These awards will cover costs for training and development and potentially salary as well. They can be applied for at different stages of a research career and it is usually on the applicant to explain why it is important for them now; what do you wish to learn and why?

An example of these awards is the NIHR Development and Skills Enhancement award.