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About MQ Mental Health Research

MQ Mental Health Research is a global mental health research charity that supports research exploring the detection, treatment, and prevention of mental illnesses. To achieve our mission of transforming mental health research, we follow four objectives outlined in [our research strategy](#):

- **Growing Talent:** We will invest in and support the brightest researchers to expand capability and drive innovation.
- **Investing in Impact:** We will invest in research that drives change in policy and practice while also challenging the status quo.
- **Challenging Inequality:** We will tackle mental health inequalities for young people, minoritized communities, and those living with serious mental health conditions.
- **Involving people:** We will triple the number of people who actively support mental health research and engage a diverse range of research participants.

Key Information

Career Level	<p>Early-career, post-doctoral, or equivalent research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 and awarded doctoral degree by scholarship start date of 01 January 2024. Successful pass means either no correction needed on the thesis or only minor corrections required. • Have been awarded doctoral degree within two years of the application deadline of 14 July 2023.
Research Area	Basic, Clinical, and Public Mental Health
Host Institution	<p>Anywhere in the world except for institutions that are based in countries which are under UK financial sanctions:</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-sanctions-regime-specific-consolidated-lists-and-releases</p>
Timeline	<p>Expression of interest opening date: 30 June 2023</p> <p>Expression of interest closing date: 14 July 2023</p> <p>Full application opening date: 26 July 2023</p> <p>Full application submission: 18 September 2023</p> <p>Decision: December 2023</p>
Funding Period	12 to 24 months
Funding Amount	Up to £95,000

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Guidelines

These guidelines explain what we're looking for in the application to our MQ Mental Health Post-Doctoral Scholarship.

As a first step, applicants will need to submit an expression of interest application. If successful shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full application.

1.2 About the award

The MQ Mental Health Post-Doctoral Scholarship aims to support distinguished newly qualified post-doctoral researchers to lead a project in mental health science. The award will help you:

- Strengthen your research experience
- Establish a research track record
- Expand your research and technical skills
- Communicate research findings
- Improve your network in the field
- Competitively apply for advanced fellowships

2. Eligibility

2.1 The Project Scope

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 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 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.

Building on the recommendations from the [Framework for Mental Health Research, Gone Too Soon Paper](#), [the Lancet Commission on Multidisciplinary Research Priorities for Covid-19 Pandemic](#), and [Mental Health Research Goals \(2020-2030\)](#), we will particularly encourage applications that consider the following areas or populations:

- Studying the social and economic determinants of mental health and particularly investigating solutions and interventions
- Understanding and reducing mental health inequalities
- Innovative research to enhance our understanding of the links between mental and physical health
- Mental health of children, adolescents, and young adults
- Prevention
- Public, population, and community mental health within the wider socioecological and economic contexts
- Using digital technology and big data in mental health
- Under-represented, and/or globally diverse populations
- Vulnerable populations at risk of mental illnesses, for example - and not limited to - people with poor physical health, people with physical or learning disabilities, looked-after children, ethnically marginalised groups, refugees, LGBTQIA+ communities, prisoners or offenders, and people with experience of homelessness.
- Supporting choice and access to mental health care across different settings

2.2 The applicant

The MQ Mental Health Post-Doctoral Scholarship is open for researchers or clinicians who:

- 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 and awarded doctoral degree by scholarship start date of 01 January 2024. i.e., the MQ scholarship start date. Successful pass means either no correction needed on the thesis or only minor corrections required.
- Have no more than two years of post-doctoral research experience by 14 July 2023.

We define post-doctoral research experience as any period spent in academic research after successful passing of PhD or higher research degree examination.

- Will be based at 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>
- Can show evidence of promising and exceptional research ability
- Can dedicate 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).

Investigators who are fortunate to have other substantial funding commitments as primary investigators on grants (research support in excess of £100,000/year, excluding full economic costing [FEC]/indirect costs) are asked not to apply and will not be considered eligible for the MQ Mental Health Post-Doctoral Scholarship.

2.2.1 Career Breaks

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.

2.2.2 Collaborations

Although it is not required, 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.

2.2.3 Host Institution

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. 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.

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.

2.2.4 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.

2.2.5 Supervisory Arrangements

All awardees are required to have one academic supervisor based at the named host institution where the research is held. The supervisor i) should be proposed in the full application, ii) 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 full application.

Cost of the supervision and mentoring cannot be included as part of the grant budget and instead should be covered by the host institution.

2.2.6 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.

3. What is Funded?

The MQ Mental Health Post-Doctoral Scholarship will provide funding of up to £95,000 (GBP) for a period of up to two years. Funds may be used for any of the following:

- **Salary** for the applicant
- **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 to 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 (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.

4. Assessment Process

4.1 Assessment Criteria

The applications will be assessed on:

- 1- Skills and potential of the applicant** to undertake the proposed project as shown by career stage, highlighted achievements, research outputs, and awards
- 2- Quality and originality of the proposed project** as shown by originality in relation to research already in the field, distinction of proposed research in relation to previous projects, suitability of the methodology proposed, feasibility of the research (methodology and timescale), and scientific soundness of the proposed project and/or approach.
- 3- Outputs, impact, and dissemination** as shown by providing adequate and clear rationale for the project, explaining potential impact, and having adequate plans to share results and engage academic and non-academic audience.
- 4- Patient and public involvement** as shown by the clear explanation of the project, 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.

The assessment will be mindful of the early career concentration of the Scholarship and will consider value of research outputs e.g., pre-print, training delivered, contribution to conferences, community outreach, key datasets, etc. The content of the publications is more important than research metrics and publication journal.

4.2 Funding Committee

The Funding Committee's role is to assess and score applications and make funding decisions and/or recommendations based on the applications review and assessment.

The Funding Committee includes international experts including academic experts from diverse disciplinary backgrounds in the field of Mental Health Science and lived experience experts. Lived experience experts will be full members of the Funding Committee, meaning they will have an equal voice and equal vote to the academic members, and will provide feedback and insights throughout the review process from a lived experience perspective.

The Funding Committee will provide feedback on full applications to be communicated by MQ Research Team. Committee members cannot discuss their assessment and decisions with applicants, so please refrain from directly addressing committee members.

4.3 Peer Review Process

In addition to the Funding Committee, national and international external reviewers with relevant expertise will assess the quality of applications. The feedback and recommendations from external reviewers will be considered by the Funding Committee when making funding recommendations.

The external reviewers are selected based on nominations from the Funding Committee and MQ Research Team.

5. The Application Process

5.1 Application Stages Overview

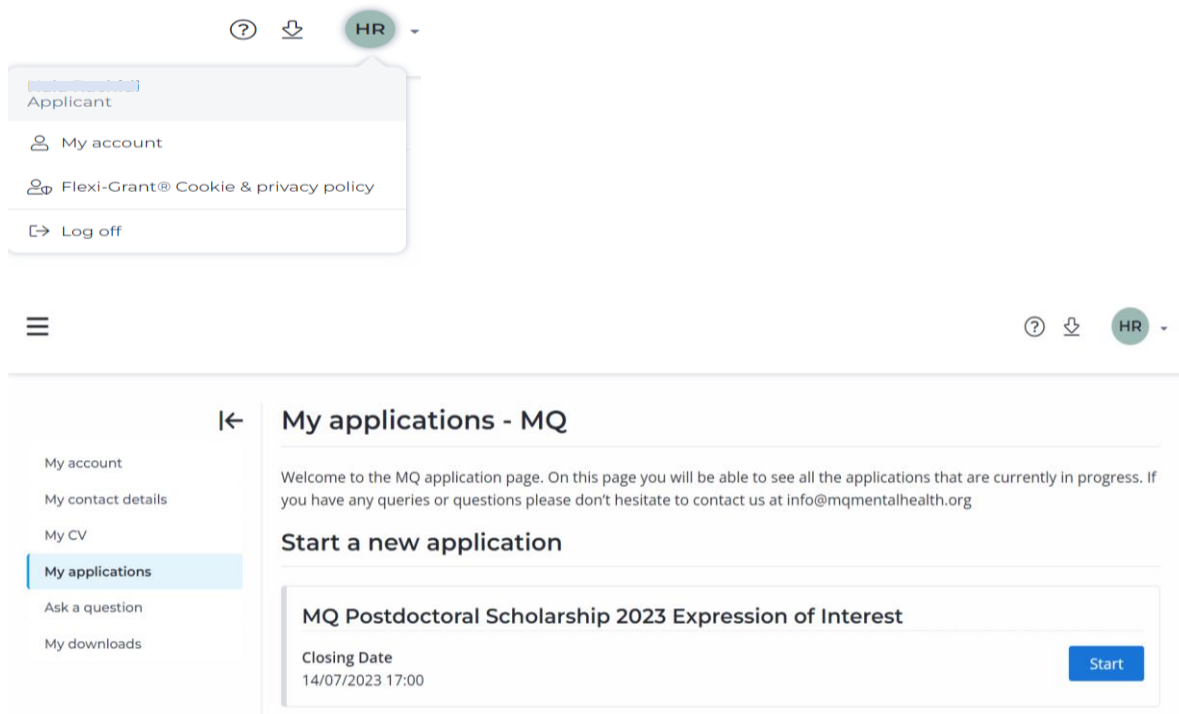
The application involves the following stages:

- 1- Applicants submit an expression of interest application by 14 July 2023
- 2- If successful, applicants will be invited to submit a full application by 18 September 2023
- 3- Full applications will be reviewed by the Funding Committee and external reviewers between September and October 2023
- 4- The Funding Committee will hold a decision meeting to shortlist the applications based on the set assessment criteria in November 2023
- 5- The Funding Committee will make the final funding recommendations by December 2023.

5.2 Completing Your Application

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 to Flexi-Grant, head to You can access the application form by registering to Flexi-Grant, head to 'My Account', 'My Applications' and start the 'MQ Post-Doctoral Scholarship 2023 Expression of Interest Application'.



The screenshot shows the Flexi-Grant user interface. At the top, there are icons for help, download, and a user profile labeled 'HR'. Below this is a dropdown menu with options: 'Applicant', 'My account', 'Flexi-Grant® Cookie & privacy policy', and 'Log off'. The main navigation bar includes a hamburger menu icon and the same 'HR' user profile icon. The page title is 'My applications - MQ'. A left-hand navigation menu lists: 'My account', 'My contact details', 'My CV', 'My applications' (highlighted), 'Ask a question', and 'My downloads'. The main content area contains a welcome message: 'Welcome to the MQ application page. On this page you will be able to see all the applications that are currently in progress. If you have any queries or questions please don't hesitate to contact us at info@mqmentalhealth.org'. Below the message is a 'Start a new application' button. Underneath, there is a card for 'MQ Postdoctoral Scholarship 2023 Expression of Interest' with a 'Closing Date' of '14/07/2023 17:00' and a blue 'Start' button.

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

5.2.1. Applicant Details

You will be asked to complete the following sections:

- Applicant: please add in your contact details. Ensure these details are kept up to date, so that we may contact you during the application process if necessary. The email address is your username on this system.
- Employment: please add any research position(s) held since the completion of your doctoral degree if applicable.
- Education and training: please list university level and professional education and training, including both completed and current qualifications, beginning with your most recent qualification. Also, you will be asked to add the date in 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/would be awarded (after the examination and corrections).*

To be eligible for this award, the months of whole-time equivalent research experience (excluding career breaks) that is equivalent to post-doctoral research, should not exceed 24.

- Personal Statement: You will be asked to provide a personal statement describing i) your experience, ii) what transferable skills you plan to bring to this scholarship, and iii) what makes you an excellent candidate for this scholarship.

5.2.2. Project Summary

You will be asked to complete the following sections:

- Title of project
- Duration of project (months)
- Proportion of time will you spend on this Scholarship
- Financial support requested
- Area of research
- Research discipline

5.2.3. Scientific abstract

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

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

References and supplementary attachment are not included in word count.

Please give full details of any references, including authors, publication year, title and journal name, volume, page numbers.

Number your references in the order in which they appear in the text, and list them in the Vancouver style (as [outlined by the US National Library of Medicine](#)).

5.2.4. 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 on mental illness and that their voice is heard throughout mental health research. 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 you in your work. We encourage you to refer to the [UK Standards for Public Involvement](#).

5.2.5. 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

5.2.6. 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.

6. 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.

7. Useful Contacts

Once you've read these guidelines, please contact us at scholarship@mqmentalhealth.org for more information about our post-doctoral scholarship.