



MND ASSOCIATION

PhD STUDENTSHIP GRANTS (Healthcare)

Summary Application Guidelines

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OBJECTIVES

The MND Association supports healthcare research for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and related conditions, in all relevant disciplines. The objective of the MND Association research funding programme is to support research aimed at increasing treatment options and improving clinical/healthcare practice, to support people living with MND and also their caregivers and families.

Researchers should be able to demonstrate that their proposed study will inform and expand the [NICE Guideline Motor Neurone Disease: Assessment and Management](#) through identifying knowledge gaps and/or generating a more robust evidence base, strengthening the case for statutory funding of high-quality MND care.

For 2025, we additionally have three specific areas of research for which we would welcome applications, please see Appendix.

The Association only supports work carried out in conjunction with universities, hospitals and other established research institutions/organisations.

PROCEDURE

Research proposals are considered in outline initially and a full application may be invited thereafter. Full applications are independently peer reviewed prior to consideration by the Association's Healthcare Research Advisory Panel (HRAP). The Panel's funding recommendations are then considered by the Board of Trustees of the MND Association. For further information on the Association's application review process, please see the MND Association's [Healthcare Research Governance Overview](#).

GUIDELINES (summary application)

Purpose of the Association's Studentship Awards

The essential purpose of the grant is to support the training of a science or healthcare graduate student to achieve the qualification of PhD (or equivalent) in a subject of direct relevance to motor neurone disease. Such support will not normally exceed *4 years (48 months)* and applicants must be sure to submit proposals that are focused and compatible with a 4 year timescale, as applicable to their application. The continuation of a grant within this period will be subject to annual review after the submission of a progress report, which is required at the completion of each year of the project.

The Association will provide:

- a student stipend as set by the MND Association, approximately in line with the stipends offered by UKRI-funded grants, expected to be as follows for grants starting in autumn 2027:

○ Year 1	£23,000 outside London	£25,000 in London
○ Year 2	£24,500 outside London	£26,500 in London
○ Year 3	£26,000 outside London	£28,000 in London
○ Year 4	£28,000 outside London	£30,000 in London
- £10,000 for research expenses in each year (justification of how this will be used is required)
- A total budget of £2,000, over the grant, for conference attendance

- Relevant tuition fees at the standard rate for UK students

Reporting is an important requirement of awarded grants (see grant condition 15). Please consider this when planning your experiments and project.

Eligibility

Applications are invited from prospective supervisors, based in institutions in the UK and Ireland. The principal applicant must have demonstrable experience of supervising PhD students.

Personal direction of the project

It is expected that the grant holder/s will be actively engaged in directing the project and supervising the student.

Collaborators

Where the viability of a project depends on the collaboration / involvement with investigators **not named as applicants**, the exact role of the collaborator/s should be clearly stated and confirmation from each collaborator indicating their willingness to participate must be provided with the application.

Timing of applications and projects

The Healthcare Research Advisory Panel (HRAP) meets to consider applications for Studentships each *autumn* to be funded the following year. The deadline date for summary applications is **late April / early May** and *invited* full applications will be considered in **October** to start October the following year.

SUMMARY APPLICATION

Applicants need to make an initial approach, by completing an online summary application indicating:

- its relevance to *classical* MND (i.e. ALS, PMA, PLS. Other conditions will only be considered if a direct benefit to MND research can be demonstrated)
- the aim/s of the work
- an outline of the proposed work plan
- how the study fits in with other work in the laboratory/institute
- the potential clinical and/or translational relevance of the research

The online summary application form is located on the MND Association website in the 'for researchers' section and will be open from **mid March**. There is also a link from the Association's home page. The *PhD Studentship Terms and Conditions*, *Research Strategy*, *Research Governance Overview* and the *Guide to completing the Online Summary Application Form* are also available online. **It is essential to be familiar with the information provided in these important documents when applying for a grant.**

INFORMATION FOR COMPLETING THE SUMMARY APPLICATION FORM

Prior to completing the form, please read the important information below (this page will also appear as the first page of the form).

DATA PROTECTION

All information provided will be entered into our grants management database and used solely for the purpose of the grants application and awarding processes (please see [Healthcare Research Governance Overview](#) section 3). When a grant has been awarded, contact details will also be added to the Association's contact database, for the purpose of providing you with MND Association information only eg deadline dates for grants rounds, symposium details, Association magazine and any other relevant information. (There will be the opportunity to opt out of receiving these).

COMPLETING THE FORM

To enable our records to be as accurate as possible, it is important to provide all relevant information requested as well as completing the mandatory fields, marked with an asterisk. Please read and use the *Guide to Completing the Online Summary Application Form* when filling out the form.

The form consists of ten pages, please work your way through these using the **previous** and **next** buttons (at the bottom of each page) to navigate through the form. **Any formatted text, diagrams or tables etc will need to be prepared offline and uploaded on the attachments page** (there is provision for two up-loads with a maximum of 10MB and 4 pages each). It is not possible to insert these direct into the form itself. Further information will be provided as you complete the form by clicking on the '?' sign for help and information on individual questions.

The form consists of the following pages:

1) Applicant Details 2) Institute Details 3) Co-applicant Details 4) Collaboration Details 5) Project Details 6) Summary Details 7) Estimated Costs 8) Attachments (figures, tables, pictures and publications) 9) Declaration 10) Applicant Feedback Survey (optional).

The step prior to submission is to review the application (at the bottom of the feedback page) and make revisions if needed. Once 'submit' is selected it will not be possible to edit the form further.

AFTER SUBMISSION

An initial automatic acknowledgement, together with a copy of the submitted application, will be sent via email to the lead applicant's email address.

If you do not receive this email, please contact us at research.grants@mndassociation.org. After consultation with its Healthcare Research Advisory Panel, the MND Association will normally respond within six weeks, to advise whether submission of a full application is appropriate or not. The closing date for full (formal) applications will be at least four weeks from the date of communication.

(These guidelines may be subject to change, please check before completing the Online Summary Application Form)

APPEXDIX: HRAP – specific subjects of interest in 2026

As stated on [our website](#), in general we ask that applicants for healthcare research projects and studentship grants should be able to demonstrate that their proposed study will inform and expand the NICE Guideline [Motor Neurone Disease: Assessment and Management](#) through identification of knowledge gaps and/or generation of a more robust knowledge base, strengthening the case for statutory funding of high-quality MND care.

In 2026, we are also highlighting specific areas for projects utilising a traditional research methodology or projects with robust real-world evaluation and approach. We would particularly welcome applications on the following:

Subject focus: Exercise and MND

We are interested in a project which addresses these following points:

- explores the wider benefits of exercise eg psychological well-being, identity, exercise which maintains mobility, activities of daily living and comfort,
- helps health and social care professionals to answer, with evidence, the questions often posed by plwMND, (eg can I continue my sport/exercise or will it worsen my MND; will it work to regain my muscles; will it delay progression; will it preserve function?) to support self-management by plwMND,
- and produces an informed guide for health and social care professionals to help them advise, judiciously their patients on appropriate and effective exercise.

Subject focus: Cognitive deficits, behavioural symptoms and prognostic indication

We are interested in project which:

- investigates cognitive and behavioural symptoms as a prognostic indicator with a view to explore these as part of the work to establish a UK validated prognostic tool

We are interested in a project which:

- investigates how cognitive and/or behavioural assessments are best used in clinical practice
- how often should they be repeated
- and what is the impact of using them on care for the patient and their carers?

Subject focus: Communication

We are interested in a project which:

- conducts a prospective census study of people with MND presenting with early onset of speech problems to establish the current baseline provision and needs of this population and how best to utilise AAC equipment. Data to include:
 - demographics (age, symptoms at onset and assessment, speech, severity/intelligibility and quality of life ratings, referral point since onset/diagnostics)
 - the specific equipment recommended and provided by non-specialist and specialist services and information on equipment use and returns
 - supplemented with patients and carers information about equipment use and consideration of important patient outcomes

We are interested in a project which:

- investigates the appropriateness and effectiveness of physical therapies and preservation of voice in people living with MND, eg Lee Silverman Voice Treatment (LSVT)

During the development of the Association's new research strategy, patients, carers and health professionals identified a number of research focus areas related to quality of life. We encourage applications which address the following areas identified:

Subject focus: How can families and carers of people living with MND best be supported?

We are interested in applications to develop evidence-based approaches to supporting families and carers which generate specific and measurable quality of life improvements for them and patients. Applications should consider the relationship with the wider health and care system and how evidence and recommendations from the research will be disseminated.

Subject focus: Can more proactive management of symptoms improve outcomes?

We are interested in applications which design and test innovative strategies for the proactive management of MND symptoms. Applications should consider how interactions with healthcare professionals will operate and the impact on existing clinical pathways.