

Pre-Doctoral Research Fellowships 2023/24

Information Sheet – General (open call)

The Royal Marsden Pre-Doctoral Research Fellowship scheme is funded by The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity, as part of the Safety, Innovation and Education Grant.

Applications for the two part-time Fellowships are now open. The awards will provide ‘first-step funding’ for nurses, allied health professionals, and pharmacists looking to begin their academic career.

The key aim of the Fellowship scheme is to allow the recipient the opportunity to undertake up to 24 months part-time study to develop their research skills, CV, and portfolio, and to produce the necessary data to springboard onto a National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Clinical Research Fellowship application or other funded doctorates.

Applicants are asked to align with the research and innovation ambitions within “Outstanding Together” (in The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust Nursing, AHP and Pharmacy Strategy 2020-2024) and our vision to undertake excellent, high-quality research that transforms care and improves outcomes for those living with and beyond cancer. The research will make an impact on patient care within the Trust, surrounding communities, and the wider NHS.

Information in this guide covers the following topics:

- Key dates
- Preparing your Pre-Doctoral Research Fellowship Application
- Planning your Research Proposal
- Application Assessment

Key Dates

16 October 2023	-	Applications open
4 December 2023	-	Trust Finance deadline
11 December 2023	-	Applications close
Early January 2024	-	Committee interviews
Mid-January 2024	-	Applicant outcome notification
Late January 2024	-	Awards begin



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Her Majesty The Queen
President
HRH The Duke of Cambridge, KG

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Preparing Your Application

Criteria & Eligibility: Ensure you have read and understood the eligibility requirements before starting your application. If you have any queries regarding your eligibility, please contact Professor Susanne Cruickshank (contact details at the end of this document). In order to be eligible to apply you must meet the following criteria:

1. Applicants must hold an RMNHSFT employment contract noting they must currently deliver services, and plan to undertake their proposed research project, for the benefit of patients at RMNHSFT. Applicants must stay on in employment at RMNHSFT for the duration of the Fellowship.
2. Applicants must be a UK resident.
3. Applicants must be able to demonstrate a commitment to utilising the Fellowship position to undertake further study and development. This is a Pre-Doctoral Fellowship. Applicants must not be registered, have secured funding for, or hold a PhD.
4. Applicants must obtain approval from their Line Manager, RM Clinical Research Supervisor, Finance Business Partner, and Divisional Director.

Application Form: The application can be found [here](#)

Applications must have all required signatures before submission; see below for important information. Do not submit any applications after **11 December 2023**. Guidance notes are given on the form in italics. Any questions about completing the form should be directed to charity.grants@rmh.nhs.uk.

Required Approval: Your application must be approved and signed by you, your **Line Manager**, your potential **RM Clinical Research Supervisor**, **Finance Business Partner**, and **Divisional Director**, before being submitted to the Charity. You will need to print and sign the 'Signatures of Approval' document (on the last page of the application form), ask everyone listed above to sign it, then scan, save as a PDF file, and submit with your application form.

Please be aware that it can take time to secure the required signatures. Keep this in mind when preparing your proposal as we cannot accept late applications. **Please be sure to liaise with your Finance Business Partner from the onset and receive their approval by 4 December 2023**. Submissions made later than this may be subject to delay and may not be ready for the application deadline.

The onus is on you as the applicant to secure all required signatures in advance of the application deadline. An application without these signatures will not be considered for funding.



Planning your application

Personal details: Alongside your contact information you will be asked to provide a statement of your qualifications and career to date. The statement should be a maximum of 2 pages and provide a summary of your CV detailing your education/training and relevant appointments. The Committee wish to use your personal statement to understand your background and provide the context for your approach to your proposed study.

Applying for the Fellowship: The Committee want to understand why you are applying for the Fellowship, how it fits within your career goals towards PhD, and any experience of research you have had to date.

What to include in your proposal: Please take note of the key information that must be included in your proposal; it is important each of these topics are addressed.

1. Title of proposed project
2. Plain English summary of the project – This is a clear explanation of your project. The Committee includes non-cancer experts, so it is important to summarise your project in lay language.
3. What is the problem being addressed? – This is an opportunity to provide a clear explanation of the problem to be addressed and how your proposed project would fill a gap in the evidence.
4. Why is this area important and how will the outcomes improve the lives of people affected by cancer? – This is an opportunity to explain why research in this area is needed, briefly describing the current literature (no more than 10 references) and providing a rationale for the particular area you are focusing on.
5. How do you propose to address the problem? – This is the plan of what you intend to do. This would include a research question/aims/objectives, the method, the plan of investigation and analysis.

Word count: Your full proposal, including references, must be completed within the allocated **1,000 words**. We want you to demonstrate that you can be succinct, specific, and focussed on what needs to be conveyed.

Application Assessment

Once your application has been submitted, the Committee members will consider each application and score in the following 4 categories:

1. Quality of the applicant
2. Quality of the project
3. Quality of the Supervisor
4. Quality of long-term career plans

Background information: It is important when putting together the background information for your detailed proposal that existing studies, evidence-base, pilot data, publications, and established tools etc. within your area of study are acknowledged. The Committee is looking to see your comments and acknowledgment of existing tools/data and importantly your reasons for utilising them (or not utilising them) in your proposed piece of work.

Practical application of the research: This point is often the difference between a good application and a great application and will be a deciding factor in whether an application is funded or not. The Committee is looking for important and interesting research topics that will have a demonstrable impact on satisfying the Trust's strategic objectives and/or the RM/ICR Research Strategy; be this immediate or long-term. Quantifying the project endpoints and practical application is key to a successful application.



Project budget: Ensure you take time to prepare an accurate and realistic budget, where each cost can be related back to the purpose of your proposed project. A maximum of **£64,000** is available through the Fellowship and can be used to cover the salary of the individual Fellow and reasonable research expenses only.

Research Supervisor: It is important that your chosen supervisor(s) has a relevant academic and professional background to support you in the delivery of your project. The Committee needs to see a direct and logical link between your supervisor(s) and your chosen research topic. The supervisor(s) should be a member of RM Trust staff, ideally an experienced nurse, allied health professional, or pharmacist clinical academic researcher (speak to Susanne Cruickshank who can help identify appropriate supervisors). However, where a research topic is particularly specialist, we can accept the addition of an external supervisor to your proposal (i.e. a Trust supervisor is chosen as well as a second non-Trust supervisor, if required).

In line with Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust strategic objectives: You will be asked in the application to demonstrate how your project fits within the “Outstanding Together” Nursing, Allied Health Professional and Pharmacy Strategy 2020-2024 and the Trust Strategic Objectives and/or the Research Strategy. When evaluating the impact of a proposal, the Committee will consider the project’s relevance to our strategic priorities.

Academic Career Plans: All Fellowship applications are assessed on the quality of the project and the quality of the applicant. The purpose of the Pre-Doctoral Fellowship programme is to provide an opportunity for individuals to develop their research skills to create a strong foundation from which to build an academic career. It is intended that successful Fellowship applicants will be able to utilise the skills and data produced in their project to springboard onto successful funding bids for further study. When addressing questions in the application form regarding your career goals, it is important **to demonstrate how the Fellowship position will support your progression on an academic career path.** The Committee wish to see a clear and considered response to taking on future study – this should be reflected both in response to your personal career pathway and the future development of your area of research.

