

# How we fund and track the progress of grants

## **Procedures relating to the award and monitoring of research grants**

## 1. Introduction

We're the largest member-led charity funder of Parkinson's research in Europe. So far, we've invested over £80million in groundbreaking research. We fund research to advance our understanding of Parkinson's and what causes it. Our research also improves treatments to make life easier for people living with Parkinson's.

To ensure the excellence of the research supported by Parkinson's UK, applications for research grants are evaluated by scientific experts and people affected by Parkinson's. Awarded grants are subject to ongoing monitoring by the charity.

The purpose of this document is to lay out the process by which Parkinson's UK makes its funding decisions and administers its research grants. Applicants should also read '[Terms and conditions for research grants](#)', the 'Information for Applicants' document for each grant scheme and other [policies](#) relating to grants.

## 2. Our grant schemes

Parkinson's UK funds research through open competition. Funding opportunities are announced each year via our [website](#), [Synapse](#) (our e-newsletter) and through advertisement on external websites.

### Fellowships

Parkinson's UK offers [Senior Research Fellowships and Clinician Researcher Training Fellowships](#).

We are also collaborating with the [Medical Research Council](#) to offer jointly funded [Career Development Awards and Clinical Research Training Fellowships](#).

### PhD studentships

Our [PhD studentships](#) provide funding over three years to students based at a UK higher education institution. Applications must be made by the prospective supervisor.

### Project grants

Our [project grants](#) tackle major Parkinson's research challenges with ground-breaking studies that get right to the heart of complex problems. Grants are awarded for up to three years. There is no upper limit on the award value, however, grants usually fall between £100,000 and £400,000.

### Small grants

Our [small grants](#) scheme provides funds for small-scale research projects and pilot studies. Small grants are offered for up to £50,000 for a maximum of 24 months.

### Themed research

Themed research grants are advertised on an ad hoc basis as priorities are identified. Applications will only be accepted if the proposed research is in the strategic area and complies with the specification for the award. Grants will normally be awarded for between two and five years. The value will vary depending on the specification.

### Cohort studies

Proposals for long term studies into Parkinson's are evaluated on a rolling basis by the [Cohort Studies Council](#). There is no maximum duration for cohort studies, but the proposal must include a review of progress every four years or at shorter intervals.

### Drug Discovery Programme

Projects with solid target validation and identified early-stage chemical leads, or suitable for a hit-finding campaign, may be considered for the Parkinson's UK Drug Discovery Programme. Before making an application in this area, please contact the team at [virtualbiotech@parkinsons.org.uk](mailto:virtualbiotech@parkinsons.org.uk).

### 3. Our grant assessment panels

The [Grant Assessment Panels](#) [GAP] provide advice to Parkinson's UK as to whether individual research grant applications merit charity funding. This involves considering the comments of peer and lay reviewers in making a judgement on the quality and relevance of each grant application.

Parkinson's UK has two Grant Assessment Panels: GAP1 and GAP2.

- **GAP1** is formed of 30-40 scientific experts and up to 11 lay review co-ordinators (who are members of the charity's [Research Support Network](#) [RSN]). The panel has responsibility for making recommendations for funding for the project grant, themed research and fellowship schemes.
- **GAP2** is formed of up to 60 scientific members from around the world. This virtual panel has responsibility for making recommendations for funding for the PhD studentship and small grant schemes.

### 4. Our lay reviewers

We have up to 100 lay grant reviewers, who are people who are personally affected by Parkinson's and are members of the charity's RSN. Reviews from lay grant reviewers allow us to incorporate the unique and valuable perspective of people affected by Parkinson's into how we decide which projects to fund. This means that the needs and interests of people affected by Parkinson's are reflected in our research.

For project grants, lay review co-ordinators collate the feedback from lay grant reviewers into reports which they present at our GAP meetings, helping to inform funding decisions by our review panels.

Lay reviewers' comments are reported at PhD studentship and small grant teleconferences by GAP2 panel members.

### 5. The application process

Applications for small grants, project grants, fellowships and PhD studentships are made via the charity's [online application system](#). Grant rounds will normally open on the system at least three months in advance of the deadline.

Applications for fellowships jointly funded with the MRC are made through the [Joint electronic-Submission \(Je-S\) system](#).

Information on how to apply for each grant scheme is available on the charity's [website](#), as are the [terms and conditions for grants](#). Once the electronic deadline has passed, no further applications will be accepted for that round.

### 6. The review procedure

#### **Clinician researcher training fellowships**

Applications will be sent out to review by at least three external peer reviewers and up to four lay grant reviewers. Reviewers score applications on a scale from zero to three.

Applications will be shortlisted based on the combined average scores of the external peer and lay grant reviewers.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview. The interview panel will be made up of members of GAP1 and lay people from the RSN.

In advance of the interview, candidates will be forwarded anonymised comments from external peer and lay reviewers. Candidates should be prepared to address concerns raised by the reviewers.

The interview panel's recommendations for funding will be submitted to the charity's Chief Executive for approval.

Applications will be judged by external peer reviewers and panel members against the following criteria:

- quality of the researcher and his or her ability to make an impact on Parkinson's research
- potential impact of the research for people affected by Parkinson's
- scientific quality of the proposal
- quality of the researcher and team
- value for money
- budget and infrastructure

### **Senior research fellowships**

Applications will be sent out to review by at least three external peer reviewers and up to four lay grant reviewers. Reviewers score applications on a scale from zero to three.

Applications will be shortlisted based on the combined average scores of the external peer and lay grant reviewers.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview. The interview panel will be made up of members of the charity's GAP1 and lay people from the RSN.

In advance of the interview, candidates will be forwarded anonymised comments from external peer and lay reviewers. Candidates should be prepared to address concerns raised by the reviewers.

The interview panel's recommendations for funding will be submitted to the charity's Chief Executive for approval.

Applications will be judged by external peer reviewers and panel members against the following criteria:

- quality of the researcher and his or her ability to make an impact on Parkinson's research
- potential impact of the research for people affected by Parkinson's
- scientific quality of the proposal
- quality of the researcher and team
- value for money
- budget and infrastructure

### **Jointly-funded MRC fellowships**

The MRC will send out applications to external peer reviewer. Parkinson's UK will seek up to four lay reviews.

Applications will be shortlisted by the MRC on the basis of the external peer reviews.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview by the MRC. Parkinson's UK will be represented on the review panel by a member of GAP1, who will have access to the lay reviews.

The interview panel's recommendations for funding will be submitted to the charity's Chief Executive for approval.

### **PhD studentships**

Applications will be reviewed initially by three members of GAP2 and up to four lay grant reviewers. Reviewers score applications on a scale from zero to three.

Applications will be shortlisted based on the combined average scores of the panel members and lay grant reviewers.

The shortlisted applications will be considered by GAP2 members not involved in the initial review process at a teleconference.

The Panel's recommendations for funding will be submitted to the charity's Chief Executive for approval.

Applications will be judged by panel members against the following criteria:

- importance and relevance of the research
- potential impact of the research for people affected by Parkinson's
- scientific quality of the proposal
- quality of the supervisor
- the training to be provided to the student
- value for money
- budget and infrastructure

### **Project and themed grants**

Applications will undergo an initial review to assess whether the plain English summary uses appropriate lay language and is realistic about the potential outcomes and timescales of the research project. The lay summary should contain similar information to that in the research proposal. If the lay summary is found to be unsuitable, your application will be withdrawn and you will be contacted by the research team. You will have two weeks to resubmit your application with an improved plain English summary.

Applications will be sent out to review by at least three external peer reviewers and up to six lay grant reviewers. Reviewers score applications on a scale from zero to three.

Applications will be shortlisted based on the combined average scores of the external peer and lay grant reviewers.

Feedback from lay and external peer reviewers will be sent to principal applicants of shortlisted applications for review. Applicants will have at least one week to reply to the queries raised or provide clarification. Principal applicants will receive an email alerting them to the timing of the 'right-to-reply' period during the summer.

The shortlisted applications (including additional information provided in reply to reviewers' comments) will be considered by GAP1 at a review meeting.

The Panel's recommendations for funding will be submitted to the charity's Chief Executive for approval.

Applications will be judged by external peer reviewers and panel members against the following criteria:

- importance and relevance of the research
- potential impact of the research for people affected by Parkinson's
- scientific quality of the proposal
- quality of the researcher and team
- value for money
- budget and infrastructure

### **Small grants**

Applications will be reviewed initially by three members of GAP2 and up to four lay grant reviewers. Reviewers score applications on a scale from zero to three.

Applications will be shortlisted based on the combined average scores of the panel members and lay grant reviewers.

The shortlisted applications will be considered by GAP2 members not involved in the initial review process at a teleconference.

The Panel's recommendations for funding will be submitted to the charity's Chief Executive for approval.

Applications will be judged by external peer reviewers and panel members against the following criteria:

- importance and relevance of the research
- potential impact of the research for people affected by Parkinson's
- scientific quality of the proposal
- quality of the researcher and team
- value for money
- budget and infrastructure

### **Cohort studies**

The Council has two classes of member:

- **Regular Members** are selected for reason of their direct supervision of, or close involvement with, major cohort studies in Parkinson's currently active in the UK.
- **Advisory Members** are selected for their special expertise in the design and conduct of cohort studies in the area of chronic neurological disorders or other relevant expertise, but are not directly involved in studies in the field of Parkinson's.

Applications will be sent out to review by at least three external peer reviewers and the Advisory Members of the Cohort Studies Council [CSC]. Reviewers score applications on a scale from zero to three.

A meeting of lay reviewers, led by a CSC Advisory Member, will discuss applications and give written feedback. This will be sent to applicants in advance of the CSC meeting at which their application will be considered.

At the CSC meeting, principal applicants will have the opportunity to give a 10 minute presentation and answer questions from both Regular and Advisory Members for 10 minutes.

In closed session, the CSC Advisory Members will consider the external, lay and Advisory reviews and make a recommendation to approve or reject each application.

The Advisory Panel's recommendations for funding will be submitted to the charity's Chief Executive for approval.

Applications will be judged by Advisory Members against the following criteria:

- importance and relevance of the research
- potential impact of the research for people affected by Parkinson's
- scientific quality of the proposal
- quality of the researcher and team
- value for money
- budget and infrastructure
- future support for the study and the participating individuals

### **Plain English summaries**

A good plain English summary is essential for evaluation by lay grant reviewers who will judge all applications against the following criteria:

- the importance and relevance of the research for people affected by Parkinson's
- the potential benefit of the research for people affected by Parkinson's
- if the proposed research involves human participants, whether they think people would be likely to take part

### **NC3Rs review**

Any application which involves non-human primates, cats, dogs or equines will be sent for additional expert 3Rs review by the [NC3Rs](#).

### **Funding decisions**

The Chief Executive has delegated authority from the Board of Trustees to approve awards up to £500,000. For awards over £500,000, Research directorate staff will write a

paper for presentation at the next Board of Trustees meeting or for circulation to trustees by email and a final decision.

Up to twice per year, the Research directorate will update the Board of Trustees on all awards.

## 7. Acceptance of awards

Once the final decision on funding has been made, applicants are sent award or rejection notices by email. Unsuccessful applicants receive a summary of comments from the lay, peer and GAP reviewers.

Successful applicants must return an acceptance form within eight weeks and advise directorate staff of the start date of their project within six months.

## 8. Life of an award

### Plain English summaries

Each project has a plain English summary for external use. The Research Communications team, in collaboration with the grantholder, will produce the summary and upload it to the charity's [website](#).

### Website and charity publications

Information about funded grants will appear on the charity's website and in our research magazine, [Progress](#), as well as other media and communication materials produced by the charity.

### Reporting

Annual reports are due on the anniversary of the start date for the project. A final report for the grant must be submitted within three months of the end date.

The Research team monitors the content of the annual and final reports, and may contact the researcher to clarify or request further information. If annual reports do not demonstrate sufficient progress against the aims of the project, the charity (in accordance with its grant terms and conditions) reserves the right to terminate the grant.

If reports are not submitted on time, invoice payments will be withheld until the report has been received. The charity also reserves the right to refuse to accept further applications for funding from the grantholder (either as a principal applicant or co-applicant) until reports for active projects are up-to-date.

Grantholders are required to make annual [researchfish®](#) submissions on the outcomes of their research. Submissions will be required over the lifetime of the grant and up to five years after the end of the grant. Grantholders are encouraged to record their outcomes in [researchfish®](#) throughout the year as they arise. We use this information to monitor performance, to understand our impact, and to support fundraising.

### Publications

Throughout the grant and after it ends, researchers are required to advise the Research directorate in advance of upcoming publications and to comply with our [open access publishing policy](#).

Our Media and Communications teams work in partnership with researchers and host institutions to maximise publicity of research outcomes.

### Financial oversight

Grant payments are made to the host institution upon production of an invoice for expenditure (quarterly in arrears). Invoices will not be approved for payment unless the grantholder is up-to-date with reports for all their Parkinson's UK grants.

## **Variations**

Grantholders who wish to apply for a cost extension, no cost extension, variation or other variation to their grant must fill out the appropriate form available by emailing [researchapplications@parkinsons.org.uk](mailto:researchapplications@parkinsons.org.uk). Applications for variations must be made at least two months before the end of the grant.

## **Assessment panels**

The charity's larger grants will also be monitored through annual assessment panels made up of staff, external scientific experts and members of the RSN.

## **Engagement**

The grantholder will be asked to host up to two engagement activities (such as hosting a project visit, speaking at a local Parkinson's UK group or supporters' conference, attending an open day with other researchers) during the grant. These activities enable members of the charity's local groups and the RSN to learn more about the grant and to meet the grantholder and the research team.

## **Transfers to projects and fundraising**

Trusts, corporates and individuals can donate funds in support of a specific project. 'Adopt a Project' transfers help the charity to achieve our pledged funds to the researchers rather than providing additional money for a specific project.

Grants may be underwritten by an external funding body. Grantholders may be asked to become involved in publicity for the trust and/or Parkinson's UK.

## **Grant completion**

Once a grant has ended and the final report submitted, grantholders and the finance officer from their institution must sign a grant completion form. The grant completion form confirms that the final report has been submitted and the final invoice has been paid.

For further information please contact [researchapplications@parkinsons.org.uk](mailto:researchapplications@parkinsons.org.uk).