2018/19 call for applications for PhD studentships

Application guidance notes

Brain Research UK PhD studentships are intended to enable outstanding graduates to gain the necessary skills and training to set them on course for the development of an independent career in research related to one of our three priority research areas.

The studentships are open to application by both clinicians and non-clinicians. They provide funding for three to four years, with total funding capped at £120,000.

<mark>The application deadline is 8am on Friday 23rd November 2018.</mark>

Remit

We are interested in mechanism-based research that addresses areas of large unmet need and demonstrates a clear pathway to clinical impact in one of the following areas:

Acquired brain and spinal cord injury
We want to fund research to advance understanding of how to deliver interventions that promote recovery at the level of impairment in people with acquired brain or spinal cord damage. This may be through behavioural interventions, enhancement of plasticity mechanisms, or both.

Neuro-oncology
We want to fund research addressing the fundamental causes, mechanisms, diagnosis or treatment of primary tumours of the brain or spinal cord, and associated neurological complications.

Headache and facial pain
We want to fund research addressing the fundamental causes, mechanisms, diagnosis or treatment of headache and facial pain.

Research projects must be hypothesis-driven and represent an area of research that applicants intend to further develop in their future careers.

Costs

Studentships will cover the following costs, up to a maximum of £120,000:

- a stipend starting at £16,000 per annum (£17,500 in London)[1]
- fees at the UK/EU level
- research consumables and other direct expenses
- conference/training costs of £1,000 per annum

[1] For clinical candidates, the stipend can be used to support a salary at the appropriate clinical level, however the balance of funds will need to be obtained from other sources.

We can only fund direct research costs and cannot contribute towards institutional overhead costs such as rent, general utilities, general administrative or secretarial costs.

Eligibility

- This call is open to prospective PhD students wishing to carry out research in the areas outlined above.

Funding world-class research into neurological conditions
Brain Research UK, Dutch House, 307-308 High Holborn, London WC1V 7LL
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7404 9982   Email: info@brainresearchuk.org.uk   Website: www.brainresearchuk.org.uk
Registered Charity in England & Wales No. 1137560. Registered Company Limited by Guarantee No. 7345516

- The call is open to students who plan to commence study towards a PhD at a recognised UK Higher Education Institution in Autumn 2019. As set out below, prospective supervisors must support this application and the proposed project.

- Candidates who have already commenced study towards a PhD are not eligible to apply.

- There is no requirement for students to be from the UK, nor resident for any amount of time before the award begins, however we will provide student fees up to the UK/EU rate only.

- Applicants must be available to attend for interview in London at their own cost.

Application process

Applications must be submitted by the prospective student using the application form provided.

The applicant must provide details of the host laboratory, the proposed project and supervisor. The supervisor and head of department, or graduate committee chair, are required to sign the application. The supervisor must provide details of their own track record on the separate supervisor form.

Applications will be considered on the basis of the applicant's academic track record, how the proposed PhD research fits in with the applicant's overall clinical training plans where applicable, previous research experience, and future academic potential. Research projects will be judged on scientific merit, originality, and the degree of alignment with the remit of this call.

The track record of the supervisor and the suitability of the research environment will also be taken into account.

Applications will be short-listed by Brain Research UK's Scientific Advisory Panel, with short-listed candidates invited to interview in February.

Short-listed applications will undergo external peer review.

Guidelines for completion of application

A. Application form

Please complete your application using the form provided.

Please be sure to address all headings and respect the stated word limits. You may include tables and figures as appropriate. *References are outside the word limits.*

Use of animals (question 14)

We support the principle of using animals in research when it is necessary to advance understanding of serious health conditions to develop better treatments and when there is no alternative.

All experiments using animals must comply with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, amended 2012, and any further embodiments, in:

- Using the simplest possible, or least sentient, species of animal appropriate

- Ensuring that distress and pain are avoided wherever possible

- Employing an appropriate design and using the minimum number of animals consistent with ensuring that scientific objectives will be met

We expect applicants to consider opportunities for Replacement, Reduction and Refinement and to demonstrate that you have done so.

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	Standard	Contemporary
Replacement	Methods which avoid or replace the use of animals	Accelerating the development and use of models and tools, based on the latest science and technologies, to address important scientific questions without the use of animals
Reduction	Methods which minimise the number of animals used per experiment	Appropriately designed and analysed animal experiments that are robust and reproducible, and truly add to the knowledge base
Refinement	Methods which minimise animal suffering and improve welfare	Advancing research into animal welfare by exploiting the latest *in vivo* technologies and by improving understanding of the impact of welfare on scientific outcomes

To enable reviewers to understand the design rationale and make robust judgements on the scientific case, applicants must include:

- an explanation of the need to use animals and the lack of realistic alternatives;
- justification for the choice of species to be used;
- an explanation of how the number of animals has been determined as well as the frequency of measurements/interventions to be used, providing power calculations where applicable;
- a description of the primary outcomes to be assessed; and
- an overview of the planned statistical analyses and their relation to the choice of sample size.

When considering experimental design, we recommend that applicants utilise the Experimental Design Assistant (EDA), a free online tool from the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs).

The EDA comprises two parts: a web application and a supporting website. Benefits include:

- The ability to build a stepwise visual representation of your experiment.
- Feedback and advice on your experimental plan.
- Dedicated support for randomisation, blinding and sample size calculation.
- Practical information to improve knowledge of experimental design.
- Improved transparency of your experimental design, allowing you to share and discuss your plan with colleagues and collaborators.

The tool will generate a PDF report, which you may attach as an appendix to your application.

To use the EDA, you need to create a free account through the EDA website so that you can save your diagrams and work on them over time.

The NC3Rs website has a wide variety of other resources and guidance to help ensure appropriate design and implementation of animal research: https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/resource-hubs

Budget (question 15)

Studentships will cover the following costs, up to a maximum of £120,000:

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You should make sure your budget is realistic, and includes anticipated inflationary increases, as the level of award will not be increased or extended to take account of unforeseen costs.

Please note that we can only fund direct research costs and cannot contribute towards institutional overhead costs such as rent, general utilities, general administrative or secretarial costs.

B. Supervisor form

The accompanying Supervisor form must be completed by your proposed supervisor(s) and sent directly to research@brainresearchuk.org.uk by the application deadline, along with a copy of their short CV.

C. Referee nominations

Personal referees

We require details of two personal referees. These must be people who know you well in a professional capacity, and are able to comment on your ability to conduct research leading to the award of a PhD. One of these people must be your current supervisor or tutor.

Please avoid nominating your proposed PhD supervisor as a personal referee (unless they are also your current supervisor/tutor).

Before nominating these referees, you must confirm that they are happy to act in this capacity.

Expert reviewers

Please also supply names and contact details of three relevant expert reviewers for your research proposal.

These nominated reviewers must be in a position to provide an independent review of the proposed research. They should be external to your institution and, if different, to the institution where the proposed PhD programme is to be carried out. They should not be people with whom you have current collaborations. They may be from the UK or overseas.

You also have the opportunity to name individuals who you specifically do not wish us to approach in relation to this project.

Supporting documents:

We require the following documents in support of your proposal.

- A copy of your CV, maximum two pages.

Submission of completed application

Applications must be submitted by email to <u>research@brainresearchuk.org.uk</u> by 8am on Friday 23rd November 2018.

Please make sure you include the following documents:

- ❑ Application form and accompanying CV (preferably combined into one file)

- ❑ Referee nomination form (separate file)

- ❑ Supervisor form – this should be sent directly by the Supervisor to <u>research@brainresearchuk.org.uk</u> by the same deadline of 8am on Friday 23rd November 2018.

These files must be original documents (in Word or PDF), not scanned from paper copies. The signed final page of the application form may be scanned and sent as a separate document if necessary.

Incomplete applications will be rejected.

Timetable

Short-listed candidates will be invited to interview in February 2019, with awards to successful candidates made shortly afterwards.

Queries

Please email <u>research@brainresearchuk.org.uk</u> with any queries or telephone Katie Martin on 0117 909 4809.