



## PhD Studentship Application Guidance

Thank you for considering applying for a grant from MND Scotland in our **PhD Studentship scheme**. In striving to 'make time count' for people affected by MND, it is important that we only fund the best research. We are also mindful of your time, so please read the guidance information contained in this document before proceeding with your application [at our online portal](#).

MND is a progressive, life-shortening illness, which arises from the death of motor neurons. The subsequent weakening of muscles leads to a loss of ability to walk, talk, eat and, eventually, breathe. In the UK, 1 in 300 people will die from MND and there is currently no cure or disease modifying treatment available. Average life expectancy following diagnosis is just 18 months. MND Scotland is committed to 'making time count' for people affected by MND and one of our core strategic goals is to fund innovative research in the search for new treatments.

MND Scotland are offering two PhD studentships to start in 2024 – **one funded by MND Scotland and one jointly funded by MND Scotland and the Anatomical Society**.

MND Scotland PhD Studentships are designed to build a strong research base in motor neuron disease by supporting promising young researchers to undertake a project that tackles a key issue in MND. Applications are welcome from all areas of adult MND research – including (but not limited to) laboratory-based, translational science, social science, engineering, machine learning, and data-based science.

Your research question should address an aspect of MND that will either:

- Progress the search for an effective treatment e.g. understanding disease mechanism/target identification/biomarker development/diagnostic development/translation into treatment etc
- Address an unmet need for the community affected by MND (including carers)
- Improve standards of care for people with MND.

In the [MND Scotland 2022-2024 research strategy](#) we outline how we will strive to make time count for people affected by MND through innovative research. In this funding call for we, therefore, particularly welcome applications that align with this strategy, including those that enable collaborative use of MND datasets, biorepositories and biobanks, or address issues raised by people affected by MND in our '[What Matters in MND](#)' survey.

**The Anatomical Society** aims to promote, develop and advance research in all aspects of the anatomical sciences. The joint MND Scotland and Anatomical Society PhD studentship aims to raise awareness of the importance of research into motor neuron disease (MND) and the role of anatomical science in improving our understanding of MND.

**Founders: John and Peigi Macleod Royal Patron: HRH The Princess Royal**

All projects that contain a substantial element of anatomical sciences approaches, for instance morphology, histology, immunohistochemistry and in situ hybridisation, advanced microscopy and in vivo imaging, will be considered for joint funding with the Anatomical Society.

## Key information

**How often?** Usually awarded annually

**How many grants are available?** We are offering up to two studentships for 2024

**For how long?** Funding is available for projects up to three years in duration

**How much funding is available?** £100,000, over three years, is available for each PhD studentship in this call.

### Eligible costs:

- PhD tuition fees (home rate),
- UKRI level student stipend (plus up to £2,000 pa London weighting),
- Justified consumables and relevant travel up to £5,000 pa

For the jointly funded MND Scotland Anatomical Society PhD Studentship, The Anatomical Society will also pay for:

- Open access publication fees for one article published in the Society journals (Journal of Anatomy and Aging Cell).
- Attendance at 3 Anatomical Society meetings over the course of the PhD, for the student

*Please note:* The MND Scotland-only funded studentship does not come with the Anatomical Society-offered additional benefits.

**When?** The deadline for this funding call is 11:59 pm on 31 October 2023

### Am I eligible?

- Applications should be submitted by the supervisor, not the student.
- The primary applicant should be a researcher based at a recognised University in the UK or, for the Anatomical Society joint funded studentship only, also the Republic of Ireland and have an employment contract that exceeds the duration of the studentship.
- The PhD student recruited must have a minimum of a 2ii degree in a relevant subject.
- We can accept applications from a clinical source but any costs above the agreed threshold will need to be met elsewhere.
- The student does not need to be named on the application and can be recruited post-award.

**How do I apply?** All applications (for both the Joint MND Scotland-Anatomical Society Studentship and the MND Scotland-only Studentship) will be submitted via the [MND Scotland online application portal](#)

The same application form will be used for both Studentships but there will be an additional box asking whether the applicant feels their application is particularly suited to the jointly funded award with the Anatomical Society. If you wish to be considered for both studentships, *you do not need to submit 2 applications* – we will automatically consider all applications as potentially eligible for either studentship.

**Anything else I need to know?** If your research proposal requires input from people affected by MND, your application must be accompanied by a completed '[Involving People in Research](#)' form. This will allow us to assess what support and assistance MND Scotland can provide for you. Should your research project be funded you will automatically be given the assistance you require.

### **What additional documentation do I need to supply?**

In addition to completion of the online application form applicants must also provide the following supplementary materials, where relevant:

- Supporting letters from main collaborators (if relevant)
- Intellectual property agreements (if relevant)
- Valid copy of ethical approval (if relevant)
- Involving People in Research request form (if relevant)

### **Guidance for completion of PhD Studentship application**

PhD Studentships are welcome from all areas of MND research – including (but not limited to) laboratory-based, translational and clinical research, social science, engineering, machine learning, and data-based science.

Your research question should address an aspect of MND that will either progress the search for an effective treatment (e.g. understanding disease mechanism/target identification/biomarker development/diagnostic development/translation into treatment etc) or address an unmet need for the community affected by MND (including carers) or improve standards of care for people with MND.

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Please consider the elements below, which relate to your study design, to aid preparation of the research proposal.

### **Background to the project**

- Description, and the clinical impact, of the health problem being addressed

- What is already known (e.g. previous studies and meta-analysis or systematic reviews that support the proposal)
- Scientific rationale for the study
- How will this study add to existing knowledge, and how it is novel?
- What are the hypotheses and/or questions to be addressed?

### **Plan, including timetable**

- Outline your scientific proposal and your study design (include power calculation synopsis for any experiments using animals)
- How do you propose to analyze the data you collect?
- How have people affected by MND been involved in the development of this research proposal and what are your plans for their future involvement?
- Will people affected by MND be participating in this research? If so, include information on your participating population and your recruitment strategies, expected challenges with recruitment and how you will overcome these? How will you be supporting their needs?, You will also need to complete an 'Involving People in Research' form.

### **Dissemination and Impact**

Outline how you plan to disseminate outcomes.

What will be the impact of your proposed research (both in the short and long term)?

What would need to happen during the lifetime, and after, of this funding (if successful) to realise long-term impact for people affected by MND?

### **Research Team**

What is the expertise of the team? How are they best placed to deliver this project?

What will co-applicants/collaborators be contributing to the project and what will they be responsible for delivering?

### **How your application will be assessed**

All applications are subjected to rigorous peer review. Application materials are initially screened by MND Scotland's Research Team and on the basis of scientific and/or research quality, applications are then sent to appropriate external peer reviewers.

The applications and reviews are then assessed by the Scientific Advisory Panel, with the highest scoring application(s) proceeding to the Board of Trustees, who make the final decision on which applications we will fund. For this funding call the Scientific Advisory Panel will have additional representatives from Anatomical Society. The panel will meet in late January or early February 2024

MND Scotland endeavours to inform applicants as to the outcome of their submission within 4 months of the respective research funding scheme closing date. Due to the nature of the peer review process, this may not always be possible.

To facilitate the peer review process, we will ask you for five key research keywords/phrases that best describe the application content.

Assessment criteria for your application will focus on scientific quality and likelihood of impact. In addition, the value for money, the quality of the learning and training and career development opportunities for the student will be taken into consideration.

If you have previously submitted a project to MND Scotland but were not funded it may be resubmitted once, provided it reached the threshold for fundability in the original submission, or the applicant was an early career researcher. You will have been informed of this in the letter informing you of your unsuccessful application.

You can download a full copy of our current terms and conditions at our website