



RCGP Scientific Foundation Board
- Practitioner's Allowance Grant Application Guidance -
Please read this guidance document prior to completing an SFB application.

Introduction

The Scientific Foundation Board (SFB), established in 1976, reflects the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGPs) commitment to research. The SFB awards grants for research relevant to general medical practice and primary care which is undertaken from a United Kingdom (UK) institution, and normally based on subjects within UK general medical practice. The SFB is currently chaired by Professor Richard Neal and includes experienced researchers and other key representatives, including PPIE, in the field of primary care. The application form, supporting documents and relevant deadlines are available on the [RCGP Website](#)

About these guidance notes

This document contains information and guidance for applicants submitting proposals for research to the SFB. It is important that you read these guidance notes fully before starting to complete the application form to ensure that you provide the correct information. The activities of the SFB are managed by the Research team in the Research & Innovation team at the RCGP. If you have any enquiries relating to the process, please contact the Research team via email (SFB@rcgp.org.uk).

General information about the SFB

The SFB views research in its broadest sense, including experimental and descriptive studies, both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The SFB offering two avenues for funding:

- Practitioners Allowance Grants (PAGs), of up to £2,000
- Annual Research Grants, of between £1,000 and £30,000

Applications of £1,000 to £30,000 for grants from the SFB are reviewed by its members individually and are then considered in an annual meeting of the SFB as whole. The closing date for the submission of applications to be considered at the annual meeting are posted on College website.

Eligibility

The SFB is able to award grants to people who are not members of the College. The SFB reserves the right to make appropriate awards on an individual case basis, as the prime consideration will be scientific quality, but the following are general guidelines to its usual practice:

- Members of any primary care discipline are eligible to apply
- For all grants the SFB encourages applications which involve multi-disciplinary collaboration and collaboration with academic departments

It is the College's policy that an applicant can apply for funding for one College award for the same piece of work **once within a three-year period**. However, if the application has been substantially reviewed following feedback from an unsuccessful application, a second application will be considered.

Re-submission of applications should include a document explaining in detail what has been changed and how the new application is different to the previous one.

Previous College award recipients may only apply for further funding from the SFB within this period if the subject matter for their proposed study has been substantially developed or is significantly different from that supported by their original award. However, in special circumstances where a project which the SFB has funded requires a small amount of additional money to allow its effective completion the SFB may be willing to make a supplementary award to the original application. If you have any doubts concerning the eligibility of your application on these grounds you should contact the Research team in the Research & Innovation team at the RCGP.

Priorities

The SFB has no research priorities of its own. In the event of applications of equal merit being received, the SFB will accord the following priority (the prime consideration is scientific quality):

- Practising GPs, particularly members of the College
- Early career and/or relatively inexperienced researchers
- Applicants who have not previously been funded by the SFB
- Short-term projects which will normally last up to 18 months

There may be occasions when the SFB is working in partnership with other organisations that it will additionally make themed calls for submission of research grants. These will be considered on their own merits in conjunction with the partner organisation.

What the SFB will not fund

It should be noted that the SFB does **not** fund:

- International projects with no substantial component of the project taking place in UK general practice
- Audit projects or guideline developments
- Undergraduate students
- Postgraduate fees (although some funding may be available for research costs)
- Applications in excess of £30,000
- Time for individuals already in receipt of funding for the same research from another source. For example, the SFB would not normally consider funding protected time for an individual working in a research practice which was in receipt of R&D support funding*
- Institutional overheads as part of its awards
- Supervision fees

- Top-up funding for studies that have exceeded their budget or are already underway
- As this is a charitable body, it is expected that senior support will be available and integral to the project.

* The SFB might, however, consider a request for protected time from an individual currently employed solely to undertake one specific research project where such a request would enable them to undertake an additional project. Such an application would be considered on an individual case basis. Applicants requiring locum cover will be required to provide receipts.

General guidance: making an application

Application form for SFB Annual Research Grants must be submitted with necessary supporting documents attached. Applications should:

- Be typed using Arial font, text no smaller than 10 point
- Be completed and submitted as a Word document (or converted pdf that allows text to be copied from the form) on the form available on the RCGP website. Scanned pdfs will not be accepted
- Not have any sections altered or edited
- Comply with word count/ size parameters
- Be submitted electronically as one file (to be sent to SFB@RCGP.org.uk)

If you do not receive acknowledgement to your application, please contact the Research Team via email (SFB@rcgp.org.uk).

Annual Research Grants (£1,000 to £30,000)

Applicants may apply for Annual Research Grants during the submissions window, as specified on the RCGP website. Applications submitted after the deadline and applications not submitted in full, with supporting documents will automatically be declined. Should applicants miss the deadline, we encourage resubmission the following year. The SFB will review these applications prior to, and during the annual SFB meeting. The SFB will aim to notify applicants of outcomes within 6-8 weeks of the annual meeting, which is usually held in autumn each year. Annual Research Grant applications must include one electronic copy of the relevant forms and supporting documents. All grant applications must contain appropriate signatures; these can be submitted as electronic documents or posted documents. These must be submitted by the application deadline.

It is essential that the appropriate signatures and statements are obtained from your adviser/ supervisor and research sponsor organisation. The signature and statement from your adviser / supervisor is required as a means of ensuring that they:

- Have read your application
- Confirm you have received and incorporated relevant advice
- Are satisfied that your application is ready for review by the SFB

This is an important requirement for early career or relatively inexperienced researchers who do not yet have the skill range of more experienced researchers, and it will lessen the likelihood of the SFB either requiring changes to the application before agreeing to fund a study or of rejecting an application because, for example, of major flaws in the study design.

If the application refers to an unpublished instrument, the requisite number of copies (see above) should accompany the application.

Successful applicants are expected to commence work and request a release of funds within six months of being awarded a grant (extensions are however possible, if permission is granted by the SFB).

Filling in the application form

Section 1A	Principal applicant details
<p>This section requests basic applicant information. If you are a member of the College, please provide your membership number and specify your local RCGP faculty.</p> <p>Where your research will contribute towards a higher qualification, please include the nature of this qualification (For example MPhil/ PhD/ MD). Research projects carried out as part of an MSc or other higher degree may be funded, but applications should not include any elements that are normally covered by university fees.</p>	

Section 1B (Optional)	Principal applicant diversity personal data
<p>This section requests basic information about the applicant's demographic profile, specifically gender, ethnicity and disability. It includes a 'prefer not to say' option to enable applicants who do not want to share this data to opt out.</p> <p>The SFB is keen to be able to promote diversity within GP research and ensure under-represented groups are able to access funding for their work.</p> <p>To do this successfully it is necessary for the SFB to monitor the demographic make-up of its applicants so it can respond to any underrepresentation appropriately.</p> <p>Any data included in this section will be kept confidential and securely and will not be shared with third parties. No individual data would ever be published.</p> <p>This data will solely be used for internal monitoring and analysis purposes to promote diversity and inclusion in research funding.</p>	

Section 1C	Principal applicant employment details
<p>This section should be used to highlight in brief any other appointments or positions of responsibility you are holding that may be relevant to your application.</p>	

Section 2	Research project summary information
<p>Please provide the following summary information about the grant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Title of project• Full amount of funding being requested• Anticipated start date• Anticipated end date• Total duration of project	

Section 3	Principal applicant funding history
<p>Please specify if you have previously received a research grant from the SFB, (or have been named as a co-applicant) and provide your grant reference number.</p> <p>The SFB does not confer new awards to any applicant if their final report from a previously funded project is still outstanding after the twelve-month deadline.</p> <p>Applications that have been declined for funding are not eligible for resubmission within a three-year period. Previous SFB grant applicants may only re-apply for funding within this period if the subject matter for their project has been substantially developed or is significantly different from their original project. For any queries concerning eligibility on these grounds please contact the Research team.</p>	

In special circumstances where a project requires a small amount of additional money to allow effective completion the SFB may make a supplementary award to the original application.

If you have applied to another funder for this work, please provide details of whether or not this application has been successful. If the application is still pending decision, please provide dates of when a decision is expected. Such an application would be considered on an individual case basis. Applicants requesting locum cover will be required to provide receipts.

Section 4

Ethical approval & research governance

Research governance

All applicants must conduct research funded by the SFB in line with the provisions of the Research Governance Frameworks for Health and Social Care of the UK. Where relevant, the EU Clinical Trials Directive which applies to all trials on human subjects involving medicinal products should be adhered to.

Research Governance Frameworks for Health and Social Care of the UK:

England

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/139565/dh_4122427.pdf

Northern Ireland

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/research-governance-framework-2007.pdf>

Scotland

<http://www.cso.scot.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/RGF-Second-Edition-February-06.pdf>

Wales:

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/Documents/952/Research%20Governance%20Framework%202009%20%28English%291.pdf>

EU Clinical Trials Directive:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/human-use/clinical-trials/index_en.htm

For research undertaken in a GP practice it may be useful to become Research Ready® accredited <https://www.extension.rcgp.org.uk/>. Research Ready® is an accessible tool that helps GP Practices ensure they meet the UK's research governance framework. Where the proposed study involves NHS patients, staff or resources, appropriate ethical approval and local research governance approval must be obtained. It is essential to ensure that strict confidentiality is maintained and that an assurance is given to participants that this will be done. This will, in any case, be required by all Research Ethics Committees.

Applicants should specify if research governance is required. In the field that requires further details, applicants should explain why governance is not required, or alternatively provide details of research governance requirements.

Ethics approval

Applicants should specify if research ethics approval is required. In the field that requires further details, applicants should explain why approval is not required, or alternatively specify if approval has been obtained. Where approval is pending, applicants should detail the organisation they have requested approval from and anticipated dates for receiving a response.

Applicants must also submit a letter with their application from the relevant research ethics committee confirming ethical approval or provide a clear explanation of why such approval is not necessary.

National Research Ethics Service:

<http://www.nres.nhs.uk/>

Confidentiality and data protection

If a study will use personal data on an individual who can be identified, this may fall under the remit of the GDPR 2018. It is the applicant’s personal responsibility to ensure that the provisions of the act are met. Further information on the act may be obtained from the Information Commissioner’s Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Email address: casework@ico.org.uk

Section 5	Sponsor
<p>Applicants are required to specify the organisation that has agreed to be the research sponsor of the project in accordance with Research Governance Frameworks. The SFB itself does not assume the role of research sponsor. In order to secure a suitable sponsor, it may be useful to consult your Principal Study Design Advisor, local academic department, primary care research network or local primary care organisation.</p> <p>The applicant should ensure that the form is signed and confirm if the organisation is on the Department of Health list of approved research sponsors.</p>	

Section 6	Application summary information
<p>In order to efficiently allocate applications to members of the SFB for review applicants are asked to indicate the health topic and main methodologies that are to be used within the proposed research. Please use the boxes provided.</p> <p>Conflict of interest Applicants should disclose any potential conflict of interest with members of the SFB. Conflict of interest may arise from a personal relationship (family/ partner/ marriage/ close personal friend), departmental connections, co-working, collaborations, association and affiliation with members of the SFB.</p>	

Section 7	Research proposal
Section 7A	Research proposal: summary
<p>Applicants should provide a short summary outlining the purpose, aims, research activities and anticipated outcomes of their research project. Please include how your research will impact primary care. This should be no longer than 300 words.</p>	

Section 7B	Research proposal: aims and objectives
<p>The research question(s) or aim of the project should be clearly defined and articulated, with links to the objectives of the study and anticipated outcomes.</p> <p>For the purposes of the SFB the aims of the project should be defined as an indication of the intentions of the research proposal, taking the form of a hypothesis, or clear research question(s). There should be an emphasis on what is to be accomplished (as opposed to how it is to be accomplished).</p> <p>In general, the research question(s) should be clearly stated as testable hypotheses if the study is an experimental one. In some types of study design (e.g. descriptive studies), research questions rather than hypothesis testing may be more appropriate.</p>	

Applicants should detail the impact they expect their proposal to have on primary care or general medical practice and patient care or outcomes.

For the purposes of the SFB, objectives should be defined as measurable activities from which it can be determined whether or not the aims of the study have been accomplished. It is recommended that objectives are presented as up to six succinct bullet points. These should be precise, focused, outline the more immediate project outcomes, and place weight upon how the aims are to be achieved. The objectives should demonstrate a clear link to the research methodology.

Section 7C, D & E

Proposal: Plan, PPIE and timeline

This section should include a plan of the investigation and details of the methodology that is to be used. Applicants are required to include a time line that demonstrates the main activities of the project and indicate how PPIE (Patient and Public involvement and Engagement) is included in your research. Applicants may wish to refer to the information provided on the form in Section 6 classifying the methodologies as qualitative and quantitative.

Definition of terms:

The factors or variables to be studied should be carefully defined and, if applicable, the applicant should demonstrate how these will be measured. If measuring outcomes (for example, of a treatment or intervention) these must also be rigorously defined. It may be necessary to conduct preliminary work in order to define terms or devise or test methods of measurement. In this circumstance, an explicit application may be made to the SFB for funding of preliminary work.

Instruments:

The means by which the applicant will obtain data should be validated, unless the application is for the construction or testing of a new instrument. This applies particularly to the use of questionnaires, especially where these are scaled to produce scores. Construction and validation of a new instrument is likely to be beyond the ability and resources of a novice applicant. It is almost always necessary to use an existing well validated instrument even if this is not completely suitable. Copies of any novel questionnaires and other instruments should be attached to your application.

Design:

The SFB expects a well written design to produce an answer to the research question posed or meet the specified aim. A good introductory text should be used to explore various designs that may be used and their respective advantages and disadvantages, prior to seeking expert advice. Where qualitative techniques (for example, interviews) are to be used, the applicant should demonstrate familiarity with the rigorous application of these methods, including analysis, and have sought appropriate advice and supervision.

Section 7F

Proposal: Background and rationale

This section should include a brief literature review and explain how you expect to add to the body of knowledge. Evidence of a thorough review of relevant background literature should be provided to support the research proposal. Citations should be provided in **Vancouver style**. It is expected that the literature review will be up to date and cite recent examples of primary research papers that facilitated a balanced, objective and comprehensive review of the field and demonstrate how this informs the research proposal. A good review would normally cite a minimum of 20 peer review references (subject to the maturity of the field being researched)

Section 7G	Research Proposal: Finance support for project - guidance on costing applications
<p>Applicants should provide a breakdown of the costs associated with the research project, aiming to use one page only (for complex/ detailed costings a supplementary document may be submitted). Applicants are required to itemise costs under the relevant headings.</p> <p>Applicants are also required to provide a total project cost, and a quarterly breakdown of anticipated withdrawal throughout the project. The funding given by the SFB is in respect of the direct attributable costs of the research and it will not fund accommodation, Human Resources, IT or Finance Department support, or any type of hosting fee.</p> <p>MSc or PhD fees will not be funded, although the expenses incurred to undertake research projects carried out as part of an MSc or other higher degree may be funded. Applications should not include any elements that are normally covered by university fees.</p> <p>Budgets for salaries, running costs and equipment costs should be shown separately, with a detailed cost calculation and itemised breakdown for funds being requested in the field entitled 'provide a breakdown on anticipated costs for this project'. Applicants are also required to ensure that appropriate arrangements have been made to enable any national pay awards or inflationary pressures occurring over the course of their project to be honoured.</p> <p>The SFB will examine all requests for office costs, including postage, stationery, photocopying, telephone usage, and mileage. Mileage will be paid at the College rate, currently 45p per mile.</p> <p>Requests for payment for the transcribing of tapes will also be funded at a standard rate, to be decided from time to time by the SFB. Currently the rate is £1.25 per minute of audio and payment will be limited to six hours work for a one-hour tape.</p> <p>When funding for the provision of consultancy services is requested it should be noted that the SFB will only reimburse the actual salary costs (i.e. salary plus National Insurance and Superannuation costs) of that individual. The SFB will not pay consultancy rates which include an element for institutional overheads and/or a profit element. Individuals acting as a consultant to a project are requested to confirm that they are not in receipt of any other source of income for the hours they are contributing to the project. This confirmation must be included with the application.</p> <p>The SFB will consider funding appropriate expenses to respondents or research subjects, provided these are fully justified and are in proportion with the scale of the study.</p> <p>Time taken by NHS staff in relation to the research may be funded through NHS R&D support funding mechanisms and applicants should explore the availability of such funding.</p> <p>All applicants should factor in open access fees with their application as the SFB can contribute up to a maximum of £2000 plus VAT towards open access publication fees (based upon current BJGP rate). In addition, the SFB may consider additional funds to present projects at conferences.</p> <p>Please note that applicants will be unable to claim for Full Economic Costing (FEC) due to the RCGP being a charitable body.</p>	

Section 7H	Proposal: Justification
<p>This section should provide justification and reasons for the support being requested, it is likely that it will draw on information presented throughout Section 7 of the form. It is limited to one page only. Applicants are advised to consider the advice given above for Section 7C.</p>	

Section 7I	Dissemination, publication and future projects
<p>We expect the research we fund to lead to outputs and an impact. This will usually be in the form of published papers and conference presentations. Research funded by SFB may also form the foundation for future larger projects or a research fellowship.</p> <p>In order for research to have an impact on the field it is important for it to be translated into practice. Applicants are asked to consider long term benefits of the research to practice and patients and outline dissemination plans to support the outputs of the research reaching peers within the profession. Applicants should link this 'outputs' section to their aims and objectives.</p> <p>Specify any plans for dissemination of work and anticipated publication via peer review publication, presentations at local, regional, national and international meetings, translation into education/ training materials and opportunities for wider PR activities.</p> <p>Recipients of awards are required to inform the SFB of their intention to publish research projects and acknowledge receipt of SFB funding in any publication (including but not limited to research papers, conference posters and conference talks). When publication is confirmed the SFB will aim to support publicity and PR of the research outcomes, where appropriate, to RCGP members and wider national audiences via the Research team in the RCGP's Research & Innovation team.</p> <p>If funding is intended to support work that may lead to subsequent grant proposals, fellowship applications or other forms of funding details of your plans should be described.</p>	

Section 8A & 8D	Sources of advice
	Principal study design advisor
<p>Applicants are required to confirm details of their Principal Study Design Advisor and briefly detail advice they have received from them. This person may also act as their statistics and finance advisor.</p> <p>The role of the Principal Study Design Advisor is to provide advice on the design of the protocol prior to the applicant submitting their proposal. This is of particular importance where the applicant has little or no research experience, as proposals which do not offer a reasonable chance of meeting their objectives will be declined funding. Sound advice will also reduce the likelihood of the SFB either requiring changes or rejecting an application, for example, because of flaws in the study design.</p>	

Section 8B	Study statistics advisor
<p>If the application uses quantitative methods, the SFB will expect applicants to have sought statistical advice when preparing their application, and for information relating to this to be included.</p> <p>Not all studies require a statistics advisor, and this section should be completed only if applicable.</p>	

Section 8C	Study finance advisor
Applicants are required to briefly specify the advice they have received from their finance advisor.	

Section 9	Research team
This space should be used to provide any further details of your research team or support facilities available for your proposal if necessary.	

Section 10	Co-applicant details
Names of all Co-applicants should be provided, along with supplementary information.	
This section can be copied, pasted and completed for each co-applicant. The guidance for principal applicants should be used to support the completion of this section of the form where relevant.	

Section 11	Supporting documents
Applicants should confirm (<i>Yes, No or Not applicable</i>) for all items that should be included and attached to their application.	

Section 12	Declaration
By signing this declaration, the applicant acknowledges that they have read and understood the application form, guidance and that the application is eligible for submission to the SFB.	

Section 13	Curriculum Vitae
Applicants and co applicants must complete the curriculum vitae. This should be no longer than 4 pages in length.	

Further information

Advice
<p>Studies which do not, in the opinion of the SFB, offer a reasonable chance of meeting their stated objectives will be declined funding. In the absence of any previous research experience, applicants are expected to seek advice on the design of the protocol before making an application. If the application relates to a quantitative study, the SFB will expect applicants to have sought statistical advice when preparing their application and for information relating to this to be included in the application.</p> <p>Some advice which may be helpful, particularly for inexperienced applicants, is set out at the end of this document. Advice may be obtained from the SFB and, in the first instance, an approach should be made to the Research team.</p> <p>If required, continuing advice may be sought from the SFB by successful applicants throughout the course of their project.</p>

Decisions
<p>The SFB will notify all applicants within 8 weeks of their meeting whether or not their application has been successful (usually December / January) for Annual Research Grants. An Agreement will be sent to all successful applicants for signing and is to be returned to the College.</p> <p>Successful applicants are required to take up their award within six months of it being awarded. Should it appear that this will not be possible, the grant holder should contact the Honorary Secretary to the SFB via the Research team as soon as possible to seek an extension.</p>

Outcomes

The outcome of the SFB's consideration of applications will normally take one of the following forms:

- Approve an application in its entirety
- Approve an application, with suggestions for the applicant that do not impact the award of the grant if they are not adopted
- Approve an application, with conditions for the applicant that must be adopted in order to receive funding
- Request further clarifications prior to making a final decision
- Invite a revised application, prepared in the style requested by the SFB. The SFB will not consider a revised application unless one has specifically been requested
- Decline funding (For example, where the study falls outside its funding remit, the methodology is inappropriate, the outcome is unlikely to meet the study's objectives)

Well written applications

Although not intended as a comprehensive guide, the SFB suggests that particular attention is paid to the following, which are commonly found in well written applications:

- Clear, specified research questions and/ or hypothesis
- Methods that will clearly answer the research question
- Methods that are clearly described and feasible
- Clear evidence of PPIE input
- Plans for dissemination or other outputs that are likely to be of benefit to patients/ carers/ outcomes
- Good value for money

Common reasons for rejection

Although not intended as a comprehensive guide, the SFB suggests that particular attention is paid to the following, which are common reasons for rejection of applications, relevant for all parts of the application but particularly in reference to the plans and methodologies:

- Incomplete application forms, missing information and no signatures
- No clearly formulated research aims or research question/ hypothesis
- A poorly conducted literature review
- Lack of a research team including the necessary skills and expertise
- Lack of supervision/support for inexperienced researchers
- Unrealistic costing or unachievable timeframes
- Lack of PPIE

Reporting to the SFB

Successful applicants are required to report any publications, presentations at regional and national levels to the SFB.

All grant holders submit a report in line with the SFB's proforma at the conclusion of their project. This must follow the SFB's format. This report should include details of any published material resulting from the project. The content may be used on the RCGP web site and in other open access locations of the RCGP.

The final report should be submitted by June, within twelve months of the expected end date of the project. If it appears that it will be difficult to meet this deadline, the Honorary Secretary should be contacted as soon as possible, via the Research team, to seek an extension. This should include a copy of the annual progress report sent to the ethics committee (if relevant).

Progress on the project should be recorded in the form of reports. Grant holders are required to submit an annual report by 30 June each year throughout the course of their grant. In the first year of their award, grant holders do not need to submit an annual report if the start date for the grant was between January and June of that year. For awards which started from 1 July onwards, an annual report must be submitted by the last day of June of the following year. Each report should contain a predicted end date for the project and indicate what progress has been made towards this.

It is the SFB's policy not to grant new awards to any applicant whose final report from a previously funded project is still outstanding after the twelve month deadline.

Video presentations:

When returning the Agreement, we will also be expecting all successful applicants to provide a short video presentation (of approximately two minutes) summarising their project. We will be using these videos to promote funded awards through the College website and social media. At the end of the project, and alongside submission of the Final Report, we will also be expecting successful applicants to provide a similar video summarising their findings and the implications of their findings.

Communication with the Board

Scientific Foundation Board, c/o The Research & Innovation Team, Royal College of General Practitioners, 30 Euston Square, London, NW1 2FB.

Email: SFB@rcgp.org.uk.

Membership of the SFB

Professor Richard Neal (Chair)
Dr Steve Mowle (Treasurer)
Representative of the RCGP Patient Partnership Group (member TBC)
Rupert Payne (representative of SAPC)
Ms Sue Collinson (representative of the RCGP Patient Partnership Group)
Professor Carolyn Chew-Graham
Dr Nicholas Thomas
Professor Sophie Park
Dr Julia Hiscock
Dr Helen Atherton
Dr Mark Lown
Dr Kathryn Hughes
Dr James Prior
Dr Sarah Tonkin-Crine