



Peer Review Process for Awards Supporting Medical Research

The Trust relies on expert reviewers to guide funding decisions for the Sir Jules Thorn Award for Biomedical Research and the Research Infrastructure Fund.

Reviewers are selected based on their expertise in the relevant field, enabling them to provide informed and impartial reviews. Expert review is central to the Trust's decision-making process, and we are extremely grateful to those who contribute their time and knowledge.

Principles

As a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC), the Trust abides by the [AMRC's six principles](#) of expert review.. In summary, these are:

- Proportionality – the Trust ensures its review processes are proportionate to the size and scale of the award. We seek sufficient, relevant advice to conduct an effective review of each application
- Independence – the Trust considers advice provided by experts, who are independent of our Trustees and staff team
- Diversity – the Trust seeks input from a diverse range of experts, including those from the UK and internationally. In addition to their scientific and clinical expertise, the Trust aims to reflect the diversity of the research community in terms of location, career stage, gender, ethnicity, and other factors.
- Rotation – To ensure fresh perspectives, the Trust regularly incorporates new reviewers. Given the breadth of our programmes, external expert reviewers are identified for each application, rather than relying on a standing group. Members of our Medical Advisory Committee (MAC) may serve for a maximum of two three-year terms
- Impartiality - The Trust's conflicts of interest policy outlines how potential conflicts are declared and managed. This policy applies to the MAC, Trustees, and staff.
- Transparency – the Trust publishes its research strategy and – in addition to this policy – explains the application and assessment processes for each grant programme on our website.

The Sir Jules Thorn Award

The Sir Jules Thorn Award provides a grant of up to £1.7 million to support a five-year programme of translational biomedical research. The research can be in any discipline or disease area but must have a justifiable claim to be at the leading edge of international science and must be led by a clearly identified Principal Applicant of outstanding quality in the early years of an established research and academic career.

The peer review process for the Award is co-ordinated by the Trust's MAC, which provides independent scientific advice to the Board of Trustees.

The review process and funding criteria for the Award are set out in the Full Guidance for Applicants, available on the Trust's website, and involves the following stages:

Preliminary Applications

- Applications are peer-reviewed by members of the MAC against the published criteria and using a standard scoring sheet to ensure consistency.
- Anonymised scores are consolidated and shared with MAC members before the committee meeting.
- A quorum of 60% of MAC members is required for meetings.
- The Committee will agree on which proposals should be taken forward to the next stage of the process and invited to submit a full application.

Full Applications and Peer Review

- Long-listed applicants may nominate independent experts to review their proposals..
- The Trust also identifies external reviewers via MAC recommendations and bibliographic databases (e.g., PubMed). Reviewers may be from the UK or international
- Each application receives at least two peer reviews, including one from an external expert identified by the Trust. Typically, 3-5 reviews are sought per application.
- External reviewers provide a written report on the research application. Their feedback is passed on to the MAC to assist in its assessment

Shortlisting and Interview

- MAC discusses the applications and feedback from reviews, selecting shortlisted candidates.
- Shortlisted applicants are invited to respond to anonymised reviewer comments and attend an interview with the MAC.
- An external expert in the relevant field attends each interview.
- MAC provides a recommendation to the Trustees on which (if any) of the shortlisted applications should be funded.

The Research Infrastructure Fund

The Research Infrastructure Fund (RIF) provides capital funding to support investment in equipment and facilities needed to accelerate internationally competitive research in UK universities and/or NHS organisations. The programme is open to applications in any discipline or disease area, but applicants need to demonstrate how the proposed investment will translate into improvements in healthcare for patients.

The review process for the RIF is co-ordinated by the Trustees in parallel with the process for the Trust's other capital programme, which supports innovation and improvement in health and care.

The criteria applied by the Trustees and external reviewers when reviewing each RIF application are set out on the Trust's website.

The expert review process has a number of stages, as follows:

- Preliminary Applications are reviewed by the Trustees. The Board of Trustees includes members with expertise in clinical research
- The proposals taken forward to the next stage of the process are invited to submit a full application, and to nominate a number of independent experts who would be qualified to provide a peer review
- The Trust will also identify expert external reviewers, based on searches of bibliographic databases such as PubMed. Members of the Medical Advisory Committee may also be asked to identify potential reviewers, where appropriate
- A minimum of two peer reviews will be obtained for each long-listed application, at least one of which will be from an external expert identified by the Trust. The Trust will normally seek to obtain 3-5 reviews per application
- External reviewers will provide a written report on the application. Their feedback is passed on to the Board of Trustees to assist in its assessment and inform its decisions regarding capital awards.

Confidentiality and Feedback

All discussions and written documents related to meetings of the Medical Advisory Committee and Board of Trustees are confidential. Applicants should not contact Committee members or Trustees about their application. Committee members or Trustees will not discuss applications with anyone outside the Trust and will forward any requests for information from applicants to Trust staff.

While the Trust may provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants, this is not guaranteed and depends on the volume of applications received.

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