



THE SIR JULES THORN AWARD FOR BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH 2026

GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

www.julesthorntrust.org.uk

These notes should be read in conjunction with the application form and Terms and Conditions for the Sir Jules Thorn Award, which are both available on the Trust's [website](#)

The deadline for preliminary applications is Monday, 15 December 2025 at noon UTC.

General information

1. Since its launch in 2001, the Sir Jules Thorn Award has supported world-leading translational research projects. The Award provides a grant of up to £1.7 million for a five-year programme of translational biomedical research. Applications for the Award may be in any discipline or disease area, but the research must be clearly at the forefront of international science and led by an outstanding Principal Applicant in the early stages of an established research and academic career.
2. At their discretion, the Trustees offer one Award each calendar year

Eligibility

3. Applications for the Award are open to UK medical schools and NHS organisations. Each eligible institution/organisation may only submit one application and will therefore need to select the proposal which is put forward. The Trust expects this selection to be made following an internal competition. The Head of the Medical School, Dean of Research or other appropriate person will need to provide a letter of support with the application, explaining how and why the proposal was selected for submission.
4. Where a medical school and affiliated NHS organisation both have a prospective proposal, they must coordinate the selection process to decide which one should be submitted.
5. The submitting institution/organisation must be able to demonstrate:
 - i. a track record in internationally competitive, cutting-edge clinical translational research
 - ii. adequate infrastructure support
 - iii. the commitment of internal resources to support the Principal Applicant and the proposed research programme, and
 - iv. that the institution or appropriate NHS partner will act as the Sponsor for the proposed study, if the application is successful, in accordance with the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research.
6. The proposal must be led by a single, clearly identified Principal Applicant of outstanding quality in the early years of an established research and academic career. The Trust is flexible in defining this and acknowledges that exceptional researchers may not follow a conventional career path or may have taken time away from research for professional or personal reasons.
7. Candidates will be expected to demonstrate a strong track record of independent research, having served as Principal Investigator for one or more research grants supported by competitive, peer-reviewed funders. Successful candidates will also typically have held

fellowships or comparable awards supported by similarly competitive funders at an earlier stage in their careers.

8. There may only be one Principal Applicant per application.
9. Institutions/organisations should note that the Trust will not use the Award to support senior researchers who are already well-established in a professorial post or candidates whose research programme has already secured substantial ongoing funding.
10. The work set out in the proposal must be a major commitment for the Principal Applicant; comprising at least 50% of their overall time. Where the Principal Applicant holds an existing award from another funder, the institution/organisation must verify in its letter of support that the terms of that other funding are consistent with the 50%-time commitment required by the Award.
11. The Award may not be used to meet the salary costs of the Principal Applicant, who should be in an institutionally-funded post for the duration of the grant.
12. Please also note that the Trust will not support applications that are to supplement an existing project supported by other funding bodies, or to cover expenditure already incurred. Applications submitted concurrently to other funders will be accepted but subsequent short-listing by the Trust would be conditional upon any such applications being withdrawn unless the Trust agrees otherwise. Any related applications must be noted in the application form.
13. The Trust's charitable status does not permit the provision of a grant which might, whether directly or indirectly, contribute to a commercial profit for a manufacturer. An application cannot, therefore, be considered where a manufacturer is supplying a cash grant, equipment, materials, drugs etc. at no cost, whether express or implied, for commercial use of the findings of the project.

Scope

14. Applications meeting the eligibility criteria may address any discipline or disease area. Studies may, for example, include:
 - significant proposals which could lead to improved diagnosis and/or prognostic methods and new treatments
 - concept validation
 - intervention trials.
15. In all cases, there must be a clear specification of the hypothesis based on pre-clinical experimental data supporting the rationale of the clinical study, based on the applicant's own work (not derivative of others' observations). Further work to support the hypothesis in the early phase of the grant or, indeed, to substantiate questions arising from clinical experiments may be supported by experimental animal models. The Trust is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) and supports AMRC's

Position statement on the use of animals in research.

16. Applications must cover the following points:
- i. all proposals must be based on appropriate bio-statistical analysis
 - ii. the project must include research involving patients
 - iii. the application must set out a clear strategy defining how the research will translate into benefits for patients and the timescale within which this will take place
 - iv. there must be a visible strategic commitment to the research by the host institution
 - v. all research, including data collection, must be conducted within the United Kingdom
 - vi. any co-applicants are expected to be actively involved in the work. Their precise role and time commitment must be stated
 - vii. all projects are expected to support the rapid and open dissemination of new knowledge arising from work funded, in whole or in part, by the Trust. All original, peer-reviewed research papers arising from the Award must be made freely available in an Open Access archive such as Europe PubMed Central. Deposit must occur at the time of final publication.
17. The Trust does not fund the overheads of the host institution or any costs incurred by the sponsoring organisation. The Trust is an NIHR RDN Non-commercial Partner in England and equivalent elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Application Process

18. There is a three-stage application process for the award. The key dates are as follows:

2025

September 2025	Call for preliminary applications.
15 December 2025	Closing date for the receipt by the Trust of preliminary applications (Applications must be received by noon UTC)

2026

February/March 2026	Announcement of long-listing and issue of invitations to submit full applications.
21 May 2026	Closing date for receipt by the Trust of full applications (Applications must be received by noon).
September 2026	Announcement of short-listed applications.
Autumn 2026	Presentations and interviews with short-listed applicants by the Medical Advisory Committee.
November 2026	Announcement of the outcome of the competition

How to Apply

19. Initial applications must be submitted using the [online application form](#).

Preliminary Applications

20. Eligible institutions are expected to widely advertise for expressions of interest and undertake a competitive process to select the strongest research programme which meets the Trust's criteria.
21. The Trust may advertise the call for applications on its website or elsewhere to encourage investigators to participate in their institution's selection process.
22. Preliminary applications must be submitted using the online application form, which is available on the Trust's website. In completing the form, institutions/organisations must provide:
- a. a 2,000-word summary of the proposed research
 - i. Explaining why it would be suitable for a translational study,
 - ii. The timescale for clinical applicability
 - iii. The unmet need which is to be investigated and how the research will meet that need
 - b. a 250-word abstract of the proposed project
 - c. short statements (150 words each) on
 - i. How the Principal Applicant meets the person specification outlined in the Eligibility section above
 - ii. How Principal Applicant will meet the required time commitment
 - d. a 400-word statement providing evidence of the impact of the Principal Applicant's previous work, and the institutional resources supporting the research
 - e. key references (maximum of 30) supporting the proposed research. These references should provide evidence that underpins the proposed study and do not need to be limited to the Principal Applicant's own publications. Each reference must include
 - i. PubMed ID number
 - ii. Title
 - iii. Name of the first author
 - iv. Current number of citations
 - f. a short CV of the Principal Applicant, including:
 - i. Major publications relevant to the application
 - ii. A list of current grant awards
 - iii. A list of grant applications awaiting a decision.

The CV, publications list and grant list must not exceed 3 pages in total

- g. the projected cost of the proposed research programme.
23. Applicants may attach a single-page appendix to the form containing figures and/or diagrams, if appropriate.
24. When submitting the application form, the Principal Applicant must also upload a letter of support from the Head of the Medical School, Dean of Research, or another appropriate person. This letter must:
- a. Confirm that a selection process was used to identify the proposal and explain why it was selected
 - b. Outline its relevance to the institution's research strategy
 - c. Confirm that the Principal Applicant will commit at least 50% of their overall time to the Award if successful
 - d. Confirm consistency with the terms of any existing awards from other funders, as outlined in paragraph 10 above
25. The preliminary application form must be submitted to the Trust by **noon on 15th December 2025. Please note:** We are unable to accept late submissions under any circumstances, including those due to technical issues encountered by the applicant. We strongly recommend submitting your application well in advance of the deadline to avoid any last-minute problems.

Assessment of Preliminary Applications

26. Preliminary applications will be evaluated by members of the Trust's Medical Advisory Committee and other experienced reviewers identified by the Trust. The Medical Advisory Committee will create a long list of applications to advance to the second stage, based on the relative merits of the submissions.

The Trust will not provide feedback at this stage of the competition or enter into discussion about the Committee's decisions.

Full Applications

27. Institutions whose preliminary submissions are longlisted will be invited to complete a full application. Full applications must be submitted using the designated application form and accompanying financial tables (Annex A), both available on the Trust's [website](#). Financial figures should be rounded to the nearest pound.
28. An electronic copy of the completed application (in PDF format) must be sent as an email attachment to Donations@julesthornttrust.org.uk. The deadline for receipt of full applications is **noon on 21st May 2026**.
29. The following documents should be submitted with the completed form:
- a. A covering letter from the applicant, where specific questions from the invitation to submit a full application can be addressed, along with any other relevant information.

- b. a letter of support from the Research Dean / Head of Department or equivalent confirming the institution's support for the Principal Applicant, the proposed programme of work and its relevance to the institution's research strategy.
- c. A letter from the Sponsor (as referenced in Q17 of the full application form) confirming their willingness and ability to take on the responsibilities of the Sponsor. (Refer to Q15 and Q16 in the Notes at the end of this Guidance for further details). If the project proposes to use animals or animal tissue, a copy of the relevant Home Office Licence per Question 16 of the full application form. (Please also refer to Q15 and Q16 in the Notes which appear at the end of this Guidance).

Assessment of Full Applications

- 30. The completed application will be subject to the Trust's normal selection procedure and will be considered in competition with other applications for the Award. All applications undergo rigorous peer review, in line with the Trust's [Peer Review Policy](#).
- 31. **When they submit the completed application, Principal Applicants should provide the name and institutional email of scientific referees whom they feel would be suitable to comment on their application.** These referees must not be colleagues from the applicant's institution or individuals they have collaborated with within the past five years. Please note that the Trust may or may not choose to approach some or all the individuals identified. It is the Trust's policy to seek opinions from whichever authorities it considers to be most appropriate, and it cannot accept requests from applicants to proscribe certain referees.
- 32. The final decision will be recommended to the Trustees by the Trust's Medical Advisory Committee after a review process aided, but not determined exclusively, by external referees. The Trust may seek further information during the process. Applications may be unsuccessful for various reasons, not all of which will be explained. However, the Trust may offer limited feedback after this stage.
- 33. Grants are awarded entirely at the Trustees' discretion, and they reserve the right not to make the Award following the completion of the review process in any particular year.

Notes On Completing the Full Application Form

Applications must use a minimum 11-point Arial font with margins of at least 2 cm on all sides. Abbreviations should not be used unless fully explained.

The application must be complete in itself. No additional pages will be accepted unless specific instructions are given.

Definition of Terms

1. A **Principal Applicant** is the lead researcher who has the main intellectual input into, and ownership of, the research if the application is successful. This individual will be both responsible and accountable for the management of the research programme and will normally be considered by the Trust to be the “holder” of the grant.
2. A **co-applicant** is a researcher who contributes significant intellectual input and shares partial ownership of the research if the application is successful.
3. A **collaborator** is an individual named in the body of the application but who would not normally be involved in the day-to-day execution of the work.
4. The Sponsor is the organisation that has overall responsibility for ensuring that proportionate, effective arrangements are in place to set up, run and report on the research study. The Sponsor's responsibilities are defined in detail in the [UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research](#).

Notes Relating to Questions on the Full Application Form

Q1 Applicant details

Provide the names of the Principal Applicant and all co-applicants.

Q2 Title of Project

Enter the title of the project.

Q3 Name and Address of Employing Institution

Enter the full name and address of the institution where the research will be conducted.

Q4 Project Duration

Please state, in months, the period for which support is sought.

Q5 Proposed start date

Please consider the timetable for the assessment of applications, any legal, ethical, or regulatory approvals required before work can commence and the expected lead time for recruitment of staff who would be working on the project. Projects must commence within 12 months of the award date to receive funding.

Q6 Proportion of working time

For the Principal Applicants and each co-applicant, please detail the amount of time – expressed as full-time equivalent (FTE) – spent on research in general and the project specifically. The time commitment must align with the Eligibility criteria outlined earlier in this guidance.

Q7 Related applications

Please see the paragraph in the Eligibility section above regarding applications submitted to other funders.

Q8 Summary of the proposed research and key goals

Please provide a concise scientific abstract and a lay summary of your project, outlining the background to the application, the proposed aims of the research and the expected outcomes. Please do not include any confidential or commercially sensitive information in this section.

Q9 Research question

Please state what you consider to be the main aims of the project and why they are important. Detail the main hypothesis to be investigated, along with a brief timetable of milestones. Proposals must present a clear, central research question within the context of existing knowledge.

Q10 Translation

Please set out how your research will translate into benefits for patients and the timescale within which this will take place. Explain how your proposal differs from or complements planned, ongoing, or recently completed studies.

Q11 Details of the research project

This section of the application should explain the aims of the proposed research programme, the work underpinning the proposal, the experimental design and methods to be used, and the timetable and milestones for the programme. You should also explain the most significant risks to achieving the aims of the study and how these will be mitigated.

Clinical studies must describe the number of people to be recruited, the inclusion and exclusion criteria for recruitment, the recruitment strategy and contingency. Clinical trials must describe how the study is statistically powered and for what endpoint.

The Trust supports the AMRC's [Position statement on the importance of public and patient involvement in medical research](#). The application should explain how the research programme has/will engage with patients. You should also explain how you will ensure that recruitment to any trial or the collection of human samples will be sufficiently representative to ensure the broad applicability of the results.

If the project involves animals, the experimental design should include the case for the number of animals required to achieve significance and the factors that might affect this. You will need to provide further information under Question 15 below.

Please state the word count at the end of the response to this question.

All information relevant to the grant proposal must be included within the application form unless explicitly directed otherwise.

Q12 References

References may be made to papers “in press”. Submit electronic copies of referenced papers that have been accepted for publication but are not yet available online, along with proof of acceptance from the journal. Manuscripts which are “in preparation” or have not yet been accepted for publication must not be included.

Q13 Curriculum Vitae of applicant(s)

Sub Paragraph d - If the source of personal salary support is indicated as “Other”, please provide details.

Sub Paragraph h - Please summarise what you consider to be your key scientific achievements and state to which periods of your career they relate. It is unnecessary to list all previous positions.

Q14 Financial details of support requested

The Excel spreadsheet (Annex A to the application form, which is available from the Trust's [website](#)) should be completed to detail the full costs of the project up to the maximum award amount of £1.7 million.

Staff Costs

- i. Please detail the salaries requested for all staff to be funded on the grant.
- ii. Salary support will be cash-limited at the point of the award. The institution should factor in a compound inflationary allowance for each post to cover the cost of future pay awards. The percentage used for the calculation should normally be the same as the most recent pay award agreed by the institution for the grade on which the individual is to be employed. Please confirm the percentage figure in the appropriate box.
- iii. Salary costs should include any London/Regional weighting allowances, contributions towards an institutional pension scheme, and employer's national insurance payments. The Trust is not able to provide funding for personal pension schemes held by individuals.
- iv. As stated in paragraph 11 of the Eligibility criteria, the salary of the Principal Investigator cannot be covered by the award.

Research Expenses – Materials & Consumables, Miscellaneous, Animals, and Equipment

- i. The Trust only covers the direct costs associated with conducting the research proposal. It does not meet the overhead costs of the host institution, sponsorship costs (see Q17), or the cost of NHS service support (see Q18). The Trust is an NIHR RDN Non-commercial Partner, which ensures that NHS service support costs incurred in the research will be met.
- ii. Requests for publication costs may not be included.
- iii. Where animal experimentation costs are incurred, applicants should complete this table after reference to their biological services manager.
- iv. Any requested contribution to the cost of PhD fees must not exceed the institution's standard PhD fee for home students.
- v. Expenses for essential travel that is to be undertaken for the immediate purposes of the project may be included for consideration. Travel costs will generally not be covered if claimable from another source.
- vi. An Award may include the cost of equipment, but it must satisfy the following criteria:
 - a) Equipment must be essential to the research
 - b) Justify the need for the equipment under Q15(f)
 - c) Equivalent equipment must not already be available at the institution
 - d) Exclude VAT where exemptions apply
 - e) No equipment may be purchased in the grant's final six months

Q15 Sub Paragraph e - Animals

It is the Trust's policy only to support the use of animals where no viable alternative exists. Applicants must prioritise animal welfare and adhere to principles of refinement, replacement, and reduction in animal use. Institutions must ensure that research involving animals complies with all applicable laws and regulations. Include copies of all relevant licences with the application. The Trust may consider proposals pending Home Office authorisation; however, no award will be activated, and no animal experiments may begin until the necessary licences are granted. The following questions should be addressed specifically:

- i. Does the work proposed involve the use of protected animals in regulated procedures under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986?
- ii. If so, what species, and how many animals?
- iii. Are any of the procedures of substantial severity?
- iv. Why is animal use necessary: are there any other possible approaches?
- v. Justify the necessity of animal use and assess whether alternative approaches could be employed.

- vi. Is the species to be used the most appropriate? This is particularly important when animals are used as models for human physiological or pathological conditions. Please justify why the species used is the most appropriate.

Q17 Research involving human participants or human tissue

All research involving human participants or biological samples requires approval from an appropriate research ethics committee. The Principal Applicant must obtain approvals from other regulatory bodies as required. For research carried out at multiple sites, ethics committee approval must cover each site.

If the research is covered by the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research, a letter from the intended Sponsor, if identified, should be included, confirming that the research proposal is consistent with the Framework and that the Sponsor is willing to undertake the responsibilities stated in the Framework and applicable clinical trial regulations. The Trust is unable to fund any research which does not have such sponsorship. The Trust does not cover costs incurred by the sponsoring organisation in fulfilling their sponsorship responsibilities.

For further questions about the Award, contact the Trust team at donations@julesthorntrust.org.uk.