

Senior Research Fellowship Application Guidance

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I. Introduction

Versus Arthritis is the charity formed by Arthritis Research UK and Arthritis Care joining together. We work alongside volunteers, healthcare professionals, researchers and friends to do everything we can to push back against arthritis. Together, we develop breakthrough treatments, campaign for arthritis to be a priority and provide support. Our remit covers all musculoskeletal conditions which affect the joints, bones and muscles including osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, back pain and osteoporosis.

We're committed to building a world-class workforce to continue the fight against arthritis through supporting research careers and ensuring there's sufficient capacity within the UK to translate ideas into benefit for people with arthritis. We aim to encourage the brightest and most committed researchers, from all relevant disciplines based in the UK and beyond, to become involved in research into musculoskeletal diseases.

Senior Research Fellowships are our most prestigious fellowship grants. They are open to postdoctoral basic scientists, clinicians, vets or nurse and allied health professionals committed to a research career in any discipline relevant to arthritis and musculoskeletal disease. Senior Research Fellowships are normally awarded for five years and aren't renewable. The maximum limit on costs that can be applied for is £750,000.

II. Eligibility

Versus Arthritis research awards may only be held in universities, hospitals or recognised academic research institutes in the UK. Any academic, clinician or allied health care professional at an eligible UK institution can apply.

Applicants should:

- have a PhD (or equivalent)
- be able to show that they are delivering an independent research programme, substantiated by publications in international journals and the award of peer-reviewed grants
- based in a UK university, hospital or research institute
- not hold an established academic post.

Projects must demonstrate a clear relevance to the [aims of Versus Arthritis](#).

Multiple applications

We will not accept overlapping applications of the same research proposal to more than one Versus Arthritis funding scheme. We will accept an application that has been submitted to another funding body, however, please check the eligibility criteria of the other funding body before making an application.

III. Information on clinical trials within fellowships

- Versus Arthritis do not support the funding of a major or substantial clinical trial as a fellowship, trials should be funded through the appropriate Versus Arthritis grant scheme which has a reviewing subcommittee with the right expertise to assess clinical trial application content. It is not considered that running a trial from within a fellowship in a trial manager role represents good training.
- Trials are supported within fellowships in a junior principal investigator role only to support learning of methodology and recruitment and assist protocol development; there should be sufficient fellowship content that is non-trial.
- It is considered suitable for a fellowship to contain methodological development work or supplementary analysis as bolt on activity to an established or proposed trial.
- It is considered suitable to conduct a feasibility/pilot clinical study within a fellowship where studies are expected to be recruiting in small numbers.
- Versus Arthritis are supportive of fellowship applications as an add on to a clinical trial that has been supported by Versus Arthritis, or elsewhere, where the fellowship component is contributing to scientific training.

IV. Note on the language

The lay case for support should be written in appropriate non-technical language. For more information on how to write a clear and informative lay summary please use the following resources:

[INVOLVE plain English summaries](#)

[The Plain English Campaign](#)

If you have further enquiries on the use of appropriate language, please email the Patient Involvement Team at patientinsight@versusarthritis.org.

V. How to apply

All applications for Versus Arthritis funding must be received through our online grant management system, [Grant Tracker](#). The deadline for submission of applications is 16:00 on the stated deadline in the call document/webpage – this deadline relates to the time Versus Arthritis receives the application NOT to the time you press submit. When you press submit an automated email will be sent firstly to your finance officer for approval and once they have approved the application a second email will be sent to your Head of Department. **It is only upon your Head of Department's approval that the application is finally submitted to Versus Arthritis.** This must all be completed

by the 16:00 deadline so we strongly recommend that applicants allow sufficient time for submission before the deadline in order to obtain the necessary approvals. No applications received after the deadline will be accepted.

The fellowship application is a one-stage process – a full application should be submitted by the deadline. As part of the full application you will be asked to complete a short scientific summary which will be used by the awarding panel for the purposes of triage.

These scholarships are awarded by a panel consisting of members of the fellowship expert group alongside appropriate experts.

There are four stages to the assessment process:

1. Triage: at this initial stage the scientific summaries of each application are assessed by the fellowship funding panel. Applicants will be informed at an early stage if their proposal has been triaged and all other applications will undergo full peer review.
2. Peer review: the full applications of those successful at triage are sent for external peer review by experts from the UK and abroad and of international standing in the field of the proposal.
3. Shortlisting: the full applications and peer reviews are assessed by the fellowship funding panel members. Shortlisted applicants are invited to attend interview.
4. Interview: the fellowship awarding panel interviews the shortlisted applicants and makes funding decisions.

Awards are typically made 5-6 months after the deadline date.

Further information and FAQs about applying for fellowships, are available here: [Applying for a fellowship | Versus Arthritis](#)

VI. Guidance for completion of the application form


Grant Tracker profile

Before creating a new application, please ensure that your CV and Research Outputs are up to date in your Grant Tracker profile. Please refer to our [guidance document](#) for full instructions on how to use the Research Outputs section.

Application form

The sections to be completed in the application form are presented below. Please ensure you reference each section before completing the online form.

Help icon

Additional information and guidance is also provided within the form for specific questions, this can be accessed by clicking on this button: 

The sections to be completed in the online application form are presented below. Please ensure you reference each section before completing the application form.

Scientific Summary

All fellowship applicants are required to provide a scientific summary as part of their full application to be used for the initial triage assessment. The format of the scientific summary is at the discretion of the candidate and it is not essential to use the items in the list below as headers, as long as the required information is provided. You may supplement the scientific summary with one scientific summary supporting diagram.

1. Introduction – to include the background to the project, the candidate’s preliminary work in the area and the objectives of the current proposal
2. Methods - to include details of the techniques to be used, the candidate’s personal experience with these techniques and/or the institutional support available in these techniques
3. Predicted outcome/wider impact of research
4. Relevance to Versus Arthritis
5. Training/facilities

If the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on the preparation of the proposal (e.g. delayed publications or reduced preliminary data). Please use the scientific summary to briefly describe these impacts.

The scientific summary has a maximum word count of **1000 words** with an additional **1000 words** permitted for candidates to include selected publications (including published abstracts) which are relevant to the application.

Project Summary

Scientific title of research: this should be descriptive. If relevant, please use PICO (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome) principles and include a project acronym.

Scientific abstract of research including key goals (max 300 words): this should include the purpose, study design, the specific area of research interest for which this application is entered, and the potential application of results.

Organisation: this should be the host institution where the project will be carried out

Proposed start date: This must not be before 09/08/2022

Proposed duration (number of months): Enter your proposed duration in months

Key Words that describe the application: Enter up to 6 key words that describe your application.

Lay Case for Support

This section may be reviewed by lay and scientific experts, please complete this section in a lay language. Further guidance on writing for a lay audience is provided in section IV.

Lay Title: The title should be descriptive and in a lay language.

Lay Abstract (max 300 words): This should outline: the background to the problem; the aims and purposes of your proposal and why they are important; a brief experimental plan; and the relevance to Versus Arthritis and potential patient benefit

Background (max 400 words): Briefly and clearly explain the context of your research, the particular area(s) that your proposal seeks to address and the need for further understanding or treatment options. Please avoid going into great detail of the condition in question unless it is rare

Hypothesis and aims (max 300 words): What are the questions you hope to answer and why?

Lay project plan (max 600 words): Give a brief overview of how you intend to answer your research question(s), including details of what experimental models you will use (e.g. human cells, animal models, clinical samples, patient and/or education research studies)

If awarded, explain the novelty and relevance of the application to the Charity's ambitions (max 300 words): How is this research different to what has been done before by your research group and others? Explain the relevance of your proposal to Versus Arthritis's ambitions

If awarded, what impact and potential benefit will this application have for those living with arthritis (max 400 words)? How will the outcomes of your research lead to clinical, patient and/or societal benefits, and what are the likely timescales to benefit? We recognise that, depending on the nature of the research, the applications that we receive can have immediate patient benefit and others increase the knowledge basis for future interventions. In applications where the outcomes directly impact on the quality of life of people with arthritis, this should be clearly detailed in this section. Where benefit is less obvious, for example in basic laboratory research, explain:

- why this study is necessary to inform a gap in knowledge that will be useful for subsequent translational research?
- how future research can be built on the findings toward benefit?
- what are the potential next steps that would be required to get your research findings to clinical intervention?
- when the benefit might be achieved, with realistic justification of these timelines?

Project details

Please provide details on the proposed project under the following headings. **Please note the word limits for each of these sections.**

Background (max 1600 words): Briefly and clearly explain the context of your research. This should include the disease/area and its clinical and/or patient impact, the particular area(s) that your

research seeks to address, and the need for further understanding. Also include past and current research, including that funded by Versus Arthritis and include the applicant's own contribution to this.

Aims and Purpose (max 250 words): State the primary hypothesis and outline the aims and objectives of the research.

Detailed plan of investigation and scientific procedures (max 2500 words): Outline the proposed programme of work to include clear work packages, milestones and methodology. Please include a Gantt chart using the attachments section of the application form. Please include the following subheadings where applicable:

- **Research design:** Provide a detailed account of the research methodology. This should include a statistical plan, measures to reduce bias, justification for the proposed sampling strategies, sample size calculation, methods of data collection, analysis and outcome measures. The plan should be separated into work packages where appropriate
- **Data management:** Please describe the approach for data management to include making the data discoverable and the process for data sharing.

Please outline how you have taken the ongoing impact of COVID-19 into account during the planning of this fellowship application (max 500 words): Please give an overview of how this project might be affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic including any risks you have identified and your planned strategies to mitigate those risks.

Candidates statement as to how the training fits in with his/her future career plans (max 500 words): Please detail why you would like to apply for a fellowship and how fellowship funding will help to further your research career.

Statement from your Head of Department agreeing to provide financial support, appropriate facilities and outlining commitment by the institution to your future career (max 300 words): We expect a strong commitment from the institution to the fellowship and to the future career of the applicant. Additional funding or resources to be provided by the institution during the fellowship (e.g. salary, provision of an additional technical support) should also be confirmed and detailed in this section.

Justification for support requested and relevance to the aims of Versus Arthritis (max 500 words): Explain the relevance of your proposal to Versus Arthritis purpose and strategic focus. Use this section to explain how this research will have an impact on and contribute to achieving the charity's mission and strategic focus. Please provide justification for the costs requested for the fellowship here.

Basic formatting can be applied to each section, but you cannot incorporate images or embed documents. Any additional documents or images can be attached in the Attachments section within this page. Please ensure any figure legends are included within the text.

Additional project details

Resources and Facilities (max 300 words): Describe the resources and facilities available to support the proposed project

Previously submitted: Please indicate if this or a related application has been submitted elsewhere, including Versus Arthritis. If a similar application has been submitted please provide details of the funder and name of scheme, as well as the outcome or expected date of outcome. If the application has been previously submitted to Versus Arthritis, please email a covering letter to research@versusarthritis.org detailing the original proposal, its outcome and explaining how the revised application has changed from the original submission before submitting your proposal. This should be no longer than one side of A4.

Intellectual Property (IP): If appropriate, please provide the following information:

- Whether the proposal is likely to produce new IP (max 500 words)
- How the new IP will be managed (max 500 words)
- Whether there is existing IP associated with the proposal (max 500 words)

IP means patents, copyright, trademarks, trade names, service marks, domain names copyrights, moral rights, rights in and to databases (including rights to prevent the extraction or reutilisation of information from a database), design rights, topography rights and all rights or forms of protection of a similar nature or having equivalent or the similar effect to any of them which may subsist anywhere in the world, whether or not any of them are registered and including applications for registration of any of them. Where appropriate explain how you will engage with your Technology Transfer/Enterprise Office. For further enquiries on any aspect of IP, please email the Research & Programmes Directorate at research@versusarthritis.org.

Industrial Support: Indicate if the application involves any external commercial organisation (including collaborations and donations). If indicated that industrial support is associated with the project, an additional page will appear in the side menu of the application form for completion. Use the additional page to provide further details of the commercial partner including contact details, details of the support/collaboration and any conflicts of interest. Please refer to our [industrial support policy](#).

Public and patient involvement

We strongly advocate for the meaningful integration of the insights of people with arthritis into the applications we receive through our funding calls. As such, the questions outlined in the application form are for the applicant to detail their interaction with people with arthritis in developing their application and planning of future work. Please refer to our [Involving people with arthritis: A researchers guide booklet](#), which aims to support you to integrate public and patient involvement into your work so that it enhances your research.

Impact

Please describe how the research project proposed will impact the lives of people affected by arthritis in the short and long term and outline what would need to happen after this grant for the long-term impact to be realised.

Scientific References

Please detail all publications that are referenced in the application. Please include full title and all authors. Please highlight all publications by your own group or current collaborators in bold.

Lead Applicant details and Lead Applicant CV

For fellowship applications, the lead applicant is the researcher who is applying for the fellowship. They are the individual who will lead the work and must be based in a UK university, hospital or recognised academic research institute in the UK.

The lead applicant details in these sections of the application form will be populated automatically based on the information that is stored in GrantTracker. To amend these details, please save and close the application form and visit the 'Manage My Details' section on the GrantTracker Versus Arthritis homepage.

Basic information: Ensure all fields marked with a red dot are completed (these are compulsory fields).

Update CV:

Degree/Qualification - Add any degrees or professional qualifications that you hold, and feel would aid your application.

Employment – List your present and last position held as a minimum. Please list any further positions that feel would aid your application.

The grants and publications sections of the lead applicant's CV should be populated via the Relevant Grants and Publications section later in this application form.

Sponsors and co-applicants

We do not require applicants to our Senior Research Fellowship to include a fellowship sponsor in their application, and co-applicants are not accepted on fellowship applications.

Publications

Please enter a complete list of the fellowship applicant's research publications to-date (full citations including title and all authors). These should be separated into

- Original peer reviewed papers
- Reviews
- Books or book chapters
- Editorials, letters or case reports

Other research outputs

Other than the publications and awards already listed in your application please list and briefly describe three to five of your key research outputs or achievements. These can cover any forms of output relevant to your research including but not limited to:

- Development and sharing of new datasets, software, research reagents, tools, methods, products or patents.
- Contributions to collaborations/consortia/team science
- Participation in PPI and engagement activities
- Influences on policy, practice, education or training
- Development of new preventative, diagnostic, treatment or management approaches and interventions
- Improvements to health or quality of life for patients and the public
- Additional relevant publications and pre-prints

Relevant Grants and Publications

Before adding relevant grants and publications to this application, the lead applicant should ensure that all their profile is up to date in their Grant Tracker account as follows:

Research grant and fellowships

Go to 'Manage My Details' section followed by "Update CV" to check or amend the list of grants and fellowships held.

Publications

Go to "My Research Outputs" to check or amend the list of publications held.


Please refer to our [guidance document](#) for full instructions on how to use the Research Outputs section.

Once the lead applicant's profile is up to date, they can then add their own relevant grants and publications in the Relevant grants and publications section of the application form.


This section allows the lead applicant to choose which grants and publications to list as part of their CV. The lead applicant can choose to list up to a maximum of ten grants and ten publications that are most relevant to the application.

The lead applicant must complete this section before the form can be submitted.

To add a grant

Use the  button to add a new field then select a grant from the drop-down menu. If the grant you wish to add is not listed in the drop-down menu, you can add it to your CV in the Manage My Details section of Grant Tracker.

To add a publication

Use the  button to add a new field then select a publication from the drop-down menu. If the publication you wish to add is not listed in the drop-down menu, you can add it to the My Research Outputs section of Grant Tracker.

There is a link to additional online guidance within this section of the application form in Grant Tracker.

Clinical information

Clinical applicants should provide details on their clinical commitments during the fellowship.

Collaborations

Enter details of any collaborators for the fellowship application. A collaborator is defined as an individual named in the body of the application who will supply research materials, specific expertise or access to animals or patients, but will not be involved in the day-to-day execution of the project.

All collaborators associated with the application will be required to provide a letter of support. These should be attached where indicated.

If the applicant has mentors in place for the fellowship, please include their details in this section.

Finance and Costs

Further details on eligible and ineligible costs for fellowships can be found on our [fellowships webpages](#). The finances requested for the grant should be entered in this section under the following headings:

Staff members (salaries)

For a Senior Research Fellowship application, the only staff members salaries to be included should be that of the fellow plus one member of support staff if required (either technical or a junior post-doctoral position). No other salaries will be accepted in this section.

For the fellow, only 50% of salary costs can be requested according to experience on the appropriate scientific or clinical salary, including London weighting if relevant. Host research organisations will be required to provide a minimum of 50% of the applicant's salary for the duration of the award, in addition to the usual contribution to the Full Economic Cost (FEC). In order to provide flexibility in budget management for host research organisations, the salary contribution can be differentially profiled across the years of the award, provided that the total cost of 50% the fellow's salary is met during the lifetime of the award.

Please provide the following information for your salary:

- Name
- Staff type (to select from a list)
- Salary scale
- Salary grade
- Increment Date
- Percentage inflation rate used

- Basic salary for each year of the fellowship,
- Employer contributions for each year of the fellowship
- London weighting (if applicable) for each year of the fellowship

To outline how the host research organisation contribution towards the fellow's salary will be differentially profiled across the years of the awards, please use the comments box provided.

For support staff there is the opportunity to include a brief CV to include educational qualifications and degrees, details of previous posts and details of any publications.

The percentage of inflation used must be included in the application and be in line with the most recent pay award agreed by the Institution and no more than 2% (as at May 2015 and this will be periodically reviewed).

You should indicate the full time equivalent (FTE) percentage to show what your time commitment to the fellowship would be. Further information on carrying out fellowships part-time is available on the [fellowships pages](#) on our website.

Animals

We require the costs associated with animal use to be separated by species and strain. Please provide the following information (multiple can be added):

- Animal species
- Animal strain
- Whether they are genetically modified
- Source of supply
- Purchase price per animal
- Number of animals to be purchased for each year of the fellowship
- Weekly maintenance cost
- Number of animals to be maintained for each year of the fellowship
- Number of weeks maintenance required for each year of the fellowship

Expenses/Consumables

Reasonable research expenses directly related to your proposal can be applied for. Items and their cost should be listed. The justification box is not mandatory but can be used if it is felt that additional justification for that item is required. A general justification for the finances requested should be provided as indicated in the Additional Project Details section (see page 8 of this document).

Apparatus/Equipment

Small item(s) of essential equipment (costing less than £30,000 in total) which are needed for the fellowship can be detailed here. Requests for individual items of equipment costing more than £5,000 must be supported by a quote. As with the expenses section, the justification is not mandatory.

Full economic costing

In line with other UK medical charities, Versus Arthritis does not provide funds for administrative costs or overheads, and funds directly incurred costs only. Ineligible costs include directly allocated costs and indirect costs:

Directly Allocated Costs – shared costs, based on estimates and do not represent actual costs on a project-by-project basis, such as:

- estates
- the costs of shared resources, such as staff and equipment

Indirect Costs – necessary for underpinning research but cannot be allocated to individual projects, and cover computing and information support, central services, general maintenance and other infrastructure costs.

Eligible costs within a senior fellowship application:

- London weighting applies to any applicant applying from an institution in London and will be payable at the rate appropriate to each host institution
- Any additional salaries/staff time (e.g. statistician/data manager/trial manager) should be costed as a consultancy under expenses and not as a salary. These costs will be considered by the panel
- Access charges for use of specialist equipment may be applied for within expenses
- Any requests for computers must be fully justified and integral to the success of the research proposal
- Costs to cover travel and accommodation (if required) to a collaborating institution can be requested
- Training courses for the professional development of the fellow can be applied for. These should be relevant to the aims of the fellowship and justified within the application
- Costs associated with patient and public involvement/engagement can be applied for. Please see our [Research Involvement Handbook](#) for guidance on how to cost these activities appropriately
- Reasonable costs associated with carrying out a pilot clinical or feasibility study can be applied for.

Ineligible costs within a senior fellowship application:

- Costs relating to staff recruitment and relocation costs
- Student tuition fees
- Home office license fees (personal and project)
- Good clinical practice (GCP) training
- Funding to provide maintenance of equipment
- Office stationery costs unless required for the project and justified accordingly
- Indemnity insurance
- Publication costs

- Travel support and open access are not to be included within standard grant applications, these are additional awards that can be applied for by a Versus Arthritis grant holder.

Time allocation

Please provide information on

- How many hours per week the fellowship applicant spends on research
- How many hours per week the fellowship applicant will spend on this project

Ethics

The Department of Health requires that research involving patients, service users, care professionals or volunteers, or their organs, tissue or data, is reviewed independently by a Research Ethics Committee (REC) to ensure it meets ethical standards (Favourable Ethical Opinion).

Please tick the box if Favourable Ethical Opinion is required for this research from an NHS Research Ethics Committee

If Favourable Ethical Opinion is not required, please enter justification for not needing it.

If Favourable Ethical Opinion is required, please tick the box if it is already in place for this research and attach the final letter from the REC in the attachments section.

If Favourable Ethical Opinion is required but not yet in place, please provide the approximate date this will be applied for.

Animal ethics

Versus Arthritis is committed to the principles of reduction, refinement and replacement in animal studies. Before completing this section please read our policy on [animal research](#).

Versus Arthritis is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities and signs up to their [position on animal research](#).

Please tick the box if the project involves the use of experimental animals or other organisms covered by the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act.

You will be required to indicate:

- The maximum severity of the procedures involved
- Whether the proposed research involved a protected species (non-human primates, cats, dogs or equidae)
- Whether the relevant Home Office project and personal licences been obtained

If you do not hold the relevant Home Office licence, please state when you expect to obtain them.

Justification for the use of animals (max 500 words): Please justify the use of animals, the species and techniques proposed and the number of animals to be used per experiment. Please include details of sample size calculations and statistical advice sought for the number of animals required to reach statistical significance.

There should be sufficient information to allow for a robust review of any applications involving animals. Further guidance is available from the [National Centre for Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research \(NC3Rs\)](#), including an online [experimental design assistant](#) to guide researcher through the design of animal experiments.

Replacement, reduction and refinement (3Rs) of animal experiments (max 500 words): Indicate whether the proposed research lead to the advancement of the 3Rs and how it will do this. Further information on the 3Rs is available from the [NC3Rs](#).

Award administrators

Please add a pre-award administrator to your application in this section if required. Pre-award administrators can access and edit the application form however their details will not appear explicitly on the completed form.

Signatories

Enter the details of the signatories required to sign-off the application. The head of department and finance office details should be completed. Before submitting your application to Versus Arthritis, you must obtain the necessary signatories prior to the deadline. A workflow diagram can be found [here](#).

Attachments

Only text can be added to the fields of the online application form. Where additional files (e.g. data figures) are required they can be uploaded in this section.

The maximum size per attachment is 10 MB.

The following documents should be included as attachments where relevant.

1. Letters of collaboration (combined PDF)
2. Letters of support (combined PDF)
3. Ethical approval
4. Animal licence(s)
5. Salary scales

If the application is a resubmission, a cover letter should be attached explaining how the revised application has changed from the original submission before submitting your proposal.

Disease category, Research focus, Research category and Methods used

In these sections, we ask you to provide some research classification information on your application. You will be asked to select a number of classifications from a standard list in each section.

End – submitting your application

To complete the application process, the final steps are as follows:

1. Select Validate form

This will check that you have completed all of the sections within the application.

2. Click Save then close

After completing these steps, you will be taken to the details page of your application. The submit application button on the right-hand side of the page should be available.

3. Click Submit

Once you have submitted your application an automated email will be sent firstly to your finance officer, once they have approved the application a second email will be sent to your Head of Department. It is only upon your Head of Department's approval that the application is finally submitted to Versus Arthritis. This must be completed by 4pm on the deadline day.

You will receive an automated email containing an acknowledgement that we have received your application. If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your application, please contact us on 0300 7900 403, allowing for sufficient time prior to the deadline.

Finally, please email suggested names of potential reviewers of your application (not connected with you or your proposal) or the names of any reviewers that you do not wish to be approached to <mailto:research@versusarthritis.org>. Please note, these will be treated confidentially.

Contact

For further enquiries on any aspect of your application, or any issues relating to the submission of your application, please email research@versusarthritis.org or phone us on 0300 7900 403.