

AMS Springboard – The role of Springboard Champions

The Academy of Medical Sciences Springboard offers a bespoke package of support to biomedical researchers at the start of their first independent post to help them launch their research careers. Funding of up to £100,000 over two years to support their research is available, as well as access to the Academy's acclaimed mentoring and career development programmes.

The Springboard Champion's role:

In each round, up to four applications are invited from selected research-active Higher Education Institutions (HEIs; please see the list at Annex 2). Our [FAQs document](#) may prove useful when determining eligibility of candidates for the scheme.

The Academy is asking Champions to:

- Liaise with relevant strategic research leads and managers within your HEI to raise awareness of the scheme. The Academy Grants Team will also publicise the scheme through our Fellowship and our other relevant contacts and would be happy to speak directly with your research office to answer any queries.
- Identify and encourage appropriate candidates. The scheme has proven highly competitive, so we ask Champions to assist in identifying and encouraging appropriate candidates to apply (please see eligibility criteria in Annex 1). While there will be many who may be in need of support as they start establishing their research groups, they will need to have a clear commitment to building a career in research. We also ask you to identify possible candidates who wish to conduct research that is eligible for the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF; see below).
- Utilise your institution's internal review and selection process to shortlist four candidates.
 - We are not prescribing a process for triaging at the HEI level, this is up to you – you may wish to use the Springboard round 5 sample application form available on [our website](#), or not. We only require the selection process to be open and transparent. The new form and documents for round 6 should be ready by end of February 2020 therefore, Institutions should begin their selection processes early March.
 - The triage process should result in a shortlist of up to 4 candidates for submission to round 6. For round 6, each HEI will send the details of their selected candidates to the Academy on **7 May 2020** and these individuals will be able to start their application forms on **12 May 2020** with a deadline of **16 June 2020**.
- In advance of the launch of the round, the Academy will work closely with the Champions to ensure that you are prepared for the upcoming round. We are available to answer questions relating to eligibility throughout, so please do feel free to share information, CVs and any other documents which may be useful with the team at springboard@acmedsci.ac.uk. We will also work with the Champions to monitor the grants scheme and to develop and implement the programmatic element ([mentoring and career development support](#)) of the scheme within their institutions.

For more information about the scheme and the selection process, please see Annex 1.

About the scheme – History of the scheme:

In 2012, the Academy convened a Task Force, chaired by Professor Martin Humphries FMedSci, to examine ways for the Academy to further support early career researchers. Amongst other findings, the Task Force recommended the development of a funding scheme for non-clinical biomedical scientists.

Scoping work carried out by the Academy identified Lecturers, or equivalent, within the first three years of starting their post and who had not yet obtained significant funding, as being in greatest need of support. The limited start-up packages normally provided and paucity of grant schemes available at this career stage makes establishing an independent research programme particularly challenging.

In May 2015, the Academy partnered with the Wellcome Trust to initiate the Academy of Medical Sciences Springboard - a scheme to support biomedical researchers newly appointed to their first independent position. In 2017, both the British Heart Foundation and the Government Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) joined the Wellcome Trust to create a funding consortium for the scheme. As of 2018, this scheme is also generously supported by Diabetes UK.

The scheme seeks to embrace the breadth of biomedical research and welcomes applications from all disciplines and approaches that contribute to the Academy's mission to improve health through research.

Eligibility:

To be eligible to apply applicants must:

- Hold an academic post that incorporates research.
- Be in their first independent (salaried) position (i.e. group-leader level) and
 - Be within **3 years (FTE)** of appointment to said position
 - Have sufficient time remaining in their current post to complete the proposed Springboard project.
- Be based within one of the eligible higher education institutions.

And they must **not**:

- Hold a clinical contract.
- Be in receipt of substantial research funding as the Principal or Co-Investigator exceeding **£150,000 over the 2 year award period** (excluding their personal salary, on costs, overheads and indirect costs).

A list of eligible institutions is available on [our website](#) and applicants should come from these institutions.

About the remit:

The Academy of Medical Sciences embraces the broad diversity of biomedical research and its non-clinical Fellows represent the breadth of the field. Equally, we encourage Springboard applicants from molecular, cellular and structural biology to anatomical, physiological, psychological, epidemiological and public health research areas. Applications are also welcome from associated fields such as engineering, chemistry and data science provided that the research proposal has a clear benefit for human health.

Applicants may use experimental or theoretical approaches and be undertaking basic laboratory research through clinical application to healthcare delivery but the work must reflect the Academy's mission to improve health through research.

Successful applicants will hold a 'Springboard award' and they will be referred to as 'Springboard award holders'. 'Fellowship' was not considered to be appropriate as the scheme will not include personal salaries. The term 'award' reflects that this is a package of support that includes funding for research as well as personal career development support.

Springboard awardees cannot also hold (or have held) a Seed award. Therefore, Wellcome Trust Seed Award recipients wouldn't be eligible for this scheme.

Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) remit

Since 2017, a small number of awards will be available each round for research that falls within the remit of the **Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)**, as set out by BEIS. This is research that directly addresses global challenges relevant to developing countries by:

- Promoting collaboration - Enabling researchers to undertake collaborative research in support of socio-economic development in certain countries
- Building research capacity – Using the strengths of the UK research base to build research capacity in developing countries through collaboration
- Training research leaders – Supporting the next generation of research leaders in developing countries

Applications will be asked to consider whether or not they are eligible for GCRF support, by considering whether:

- Countries on the [DAC list](#) will directly benefit from the proposed research
- Developmental challenges of these countries are of primary relevance to the proposed research
- How the outcome of the proposed research will promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the [DAC list](#).

For more information in this area, to help guide you to establish whether your research fits this remit, please see the [BEIS advice on GCRF](#).

What is offered?

This scheme is targeted at those who are in the early stages of their first independent research position. They should not already have substantial funding from other sources, such as large personal fellowships.

The maximum amount available is £100,000 over two years towards research costs and professional development. For example, funds can be used towards the employment of support staff, purchase of consumables and equipment, access to technical support, training and travel; funds cannot be used to pay for their personal salary costs. The award will be paid in two annual instalments with a minimum of £50,000 for the first payment.

Springboard applicants put forward by their institution will be invited to participate in the Academy's [one-to-one mentoring](#) scheme and a programme of events and activities will be developed for their benefit.

Selection process:

There is one funding round each year with the Selection Panel meeting in November. Applications will be invited from selected research-active HEIs, which may put forward up to four applications per round. Springboard Champions will be appointed in each eligible HEI and they will be responsible for disseminating information about the scheme and also shortlisting (using available mechanisms within their HEIs) up to 4 applicants for the scheme. These 4 applicants will then submit a full application to the Academy.

Applications will be reviewed by at least two Academy Fellows and other experts in their research field. Awards will be made by the Springboard Selection Panel. From round 6 Professor Frances Platt FMedSci will be taking over as Panel Chair.

Details of the selection panel are available on [our website](#). Applicants will not be required to attend an interview.

Key assessment criteria:

The key assessment criteria that will be considered (and will have equal weighting) are in three areas:

1. The applicant (academic track record; potential benefit of the project to their career; clarity of plans for obtaining further funding; and career aspirations)
2. Research quality (importance and relevance of the research question; quality and appropriateness of the research methodology; and degree of innovation)
3. Research environment and support (quality of the research environment and availability of appropriate support; quality of Data Management and Sharing plans, where provided; and satisfactory statements of support from the Head of Department and Springboard Champion)