Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers: Research outputs and impact 2019

December 2019

The Academy of Medical Sciences

The Academy of Medical Sciences

The Academy of Medical Sciences is the independent body in the UK representing the diversity of medical science. Our mission is to promote medical science and its translation into benefits for society. The Academy's elected Fellows are the United Kingdom's leading medical scientists from hospitals, academia, industry and the public service. We work with them to promote excellence, influence policy to improve health and wealth, nurture the next generation of medical researchers, link academia, industry and the NHS, seize international opportunities and encourage dialogue about the medical sciences.

All web references were accessed in November 2019.

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Contents

Background

In 2008 the Academy partnered with the Wellcome Trust to launch the Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers scheme. The scheme helps research-active clinical lecturers to build and establish their research portfolios and provides the means to generate data to support longer-term fellowships and awards.

Award holders receive:
• Funds of up to £30,000 over one or two years.
• Mentorship through the Academy's established mentoring scheme.
• A comprehensive career support programme through the Academy's career development activities, such as the SUSTAIN programme, scientific meetings, and career development events and training. In 2013 the Academy launched the Winter Science Meeting – a meeting designed to bring together Starter Grant holders. This meeting has been a huge success and as a result has now been extended to all Academy awardees.

Unsuccessful applicants to the Starter Grants scheme receive feedback and are allowed to resubmit their application at a future round.
Over the past 10 years, the scheme has evolved and encourages applications from Clinical Lecturers across all medical specialties including dentists, general practitioners and veterinarians.

The Starter Grants selection Panel meets twice a year and supports on average 45 new clinical lecturers each year, awarding over £1.3 million annually. In total, 479 Clinical Lecturers have now been supported through 21 rounds of the scheme, with round 22 underway.

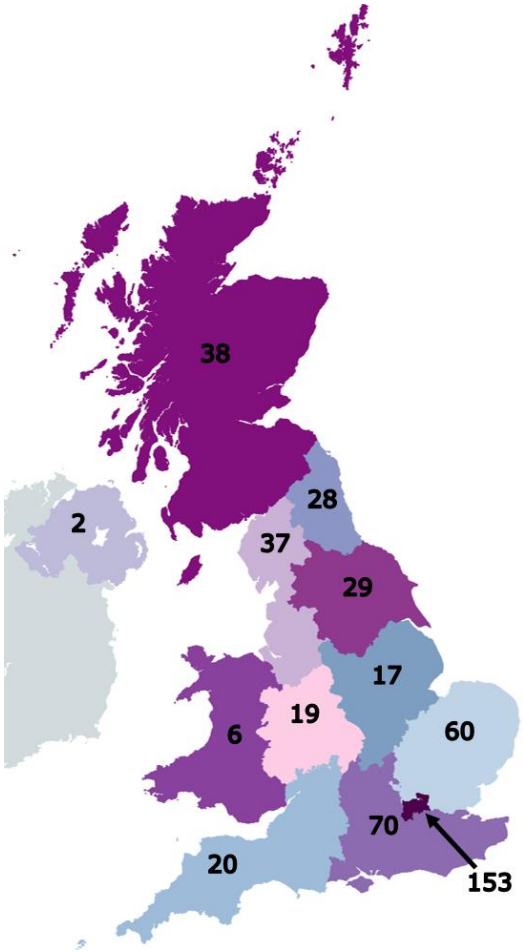
Since its launch, a funding consortium has been formed to support the Starter Grants scheme; currently comprising the Wellcome Trust, Medical Research Council, British Heart Foundation, Versus Arthritis, Diabetes UK and the British Thoracic Society (through the Helen and Andrew Douglas bequest), to whom we are grateful for their continued support.

Starter Grants at a glance

To date, we have awarded over £13 million to 479 clinical lecturers through 21 grant rounds. The scheme supports clinical lecturers from a broad range of clinical specialties, as summarised in Table 1. The geographic distribution of these awards for rounds 1 to 21 are presented in Figure 1, while the gender split of applicants and awardees is presented in Table 2.

Awardee clinical specialty	Reporting in 2018/19	Total awardees
Surgery	34	67
Neurology	24	45
Cardiology	20	42
Infectious diseases	16	23
Oncology	14	32
Psychiatry	14	24
Paediatrics	11	19
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	10	19
Gastroenterology	9	15
Respiratory Medicine	9	19
Anaesthetics and intensive care	8	9
Ophthalmology	8	16
Haematology	7	14
Rheumatology	7	12
Dentistry	6	12
Pathology	6	10
Public Health	6	7
Endocrinology	4	14
Geriatric Medicine	4	5
Nephrology	4	23
Radiology	4	6
Clinical Genetics	3	7
General Practice	3	5
Palliative Medicine	3	3
Trauma & Orthopaedics	3	5
Clinical Pharmacology	2	3
Urology	2	8
Veterinary Medicine	2	3
Hepatology	1	2
Immunology	1	2
Otolaryngology	1	1
Tropical medicine	1	1
Veterinary Pathology	1	2
Dermatology	0	4
Grand Total	**248**	**479**

Table 1 – Clinical specialty of Starter Grant holders reporting in the 2018/19 submission window and in total since Round 1 in 2009.



Region	Reporting in 2018/19	Total awardees
London	74	153
South East	41	70
East Anglia	34	60
Yorkshire and Humberside	22	29
Scotland	19	38
North West	15	37
South West	11	20
East Midlands	10	17
North East	9	28
West Midlands	8	19
Wales	3	6
Northern Ireland	2	2
Grand Total	**248**	**479**

Figure 1 – Geographical distribution of award holders

Gender split	Totals	Average by round
Applications considered by Panel		
Male	756	36
Female	404	19
Total	1160	55
Percentage Male	65.2%	65.3%
Percentage Female	34.8%	34.7%
Number of awards offered		
Male	321	15
Female	158	8
Total	479	23
Percentage Male	67%	63.7%
Percentage Female	33%	36.3%

Table 2 – Gender split of applicants and awardees across all rounds (Round 1 to Round 21)

Aims of the report

With this report we aim to summarise the outputs and impact of our Starter Grant for Clinical Lecturers funding scheme, as reported by the award holders on the Researchfish platform. The report pulls together quantitative analyses of data from Researchfish, as well as case studies drawn from awards that are either ongoing or were recently completed.
By outlining the outputs reported by the award holders we hope to demonstrate the impact of the scheme in generating new knowledge and helping retain clinical researchers within academia by supporting their development to more senior research-active and independent positions. The analysis is complemented by the case studies, through which we explore individual awards in greater detail, and beyond the most recent submission window. Each case study presents the researcher and research supported by the grant and the impact of the award on the award holder's career.

How the data is captured

The Academy adopted Researchfish in 2013 as the sole reporting system for its grant schemes, replacing end of grant reports. Award holders are required to submit data to Researchfish annually throughout the lifetime of their grant and for the year immediately following the close of their award; they are also requested to continue doing so for up to five years after their award finishes. Researchfish submissions are completed between January and March of each year.

This submission window captured new research outputs reported between April 2018 and March 2019. It is important to note that some outputs may pre-date the reporting period but were only reported in this submission window.

2018/19 reporting statistics

In total, 248 Starter Grant holders reported to us in the latest submission window, representative of 129 active awards and 119 closed awards. Of all the award holders that are required to submit a report, 87% complied and submitted. As we adopted Researchfish in 2013, not all awards have been captured on the system. The majority of starter grants awarded from round 5 onwards (June 2011 Panel) have been captured and there has been a steady increase of grant holders reporting per round since the adoption of the platform (Figure 2). As rounds 20 and 21 were awarded shortly

before and shortly after the 2018/19 submission window, we will receive and analyse the first reports from these grant holders in the 2019/20 window.

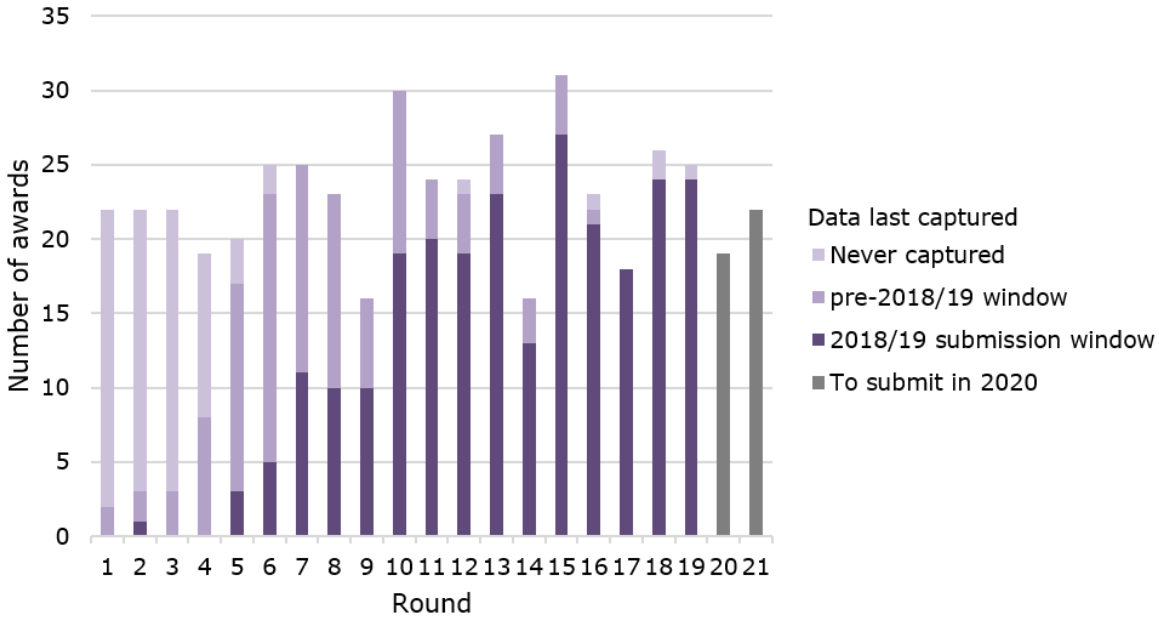


Figure 2 – Number of awards captured in Researchfish

Notes on the analysis

Two time periods ('2018/19' and 'To date') have been used for the analysis of the Starter Grants Researchfish data, which span all rounds up until round 19 of the scheme.

- **2018/19** – New outputs first submitted in the 2019 submission period (between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019).

- **To date** – All data submitted on Researchfish since its adoption by the Academy in 2013.

Award holders are required to report to us within the tenure of the award and asked to continue reporting for up to five years after its completion. References are made to live and closed awards in this report, which are defined as follows:

- **Live** – Award with an end date occurring within or after the 2018/19 submission window, i.e. after 31 March 2018, excluding awards made in round 20 and 21 (which were not captured in the submission window).

- **Closed** – Award with an end date occurring on or before the 2018/19 submission window start date, i.e. on or before 31 March 2018.

Research outputs and impact

In this section, we discuss outputs that were reported to us which demonstrate the impact of the scheme in generating new knowledge and enabling the development of our Starter Grant holders. For this, we focus primarily on publications produced, further funding leveraged as a result of this scheme, and career progression. We also look at collaborations formed, prizes and awards, and influences on policy and practice.
Grant holders were asked to report outputs that arose as a result of their Starter Grant award. Because research is a collaborative endeavour, some of the outputs presented here may also have been supported by additional awards.

New outputs: April 2018 – March 2019

During this submission window we received reports from 248 Starter Grant award holders – of these, 129 are active award holders, some having only recently started their grant, while 119 have already completed their awards.

Highlights:

Starter Grant award holders also reported receiving 66 awards, prizes and other markers of esteem and reported eight instances of influencing policy and practice.

Publications

New outputs captured in the 2018/19 submission window:
Starter Grant holders reported **397** new publications stemming from their Starter Grant award:

- **376** peer reviewed journal articles
- **15** conference proceedings and abstracts
- **six** book chapters

The most popular journal in which our grant holders reported publications in this year's submission period was The British Journal of Surgery (Table 4). Of the 397 newly reported publications, 273 publications were published within the submission window period.

In 2018/19, publications were reported by award holders from 26 of the 36 clinical specialties represented in the Researchfish data that year (Table 3). Many of the journals in which the award holders published are dedicated to work of a clinical nature, showing the translational benefit these funds provide. Award holders specialising in Surgery, Cardiology, Neurology and Psychiatry were together responsible for over a half of the publications reported in 2018/19, reflecting the high number of award holders working in those disciplines (Table 3). A high number of publications was produced by a small group of individuals from less represented specialties, e.g. Clinical Pharmacology and Obstetrics and Gynaecology. This illustrates that these award holders are highly productive, with two award holders across these two specialities each reporting six publications that were newly published within the 2018/2019 submission window.

Clinical specialty	Number of publications	Award holders reporting
Surgery	91	15
Cardiology	48	10
Neurology	40	14
Psychiatry	37	8
Infectious Diseases	25	7
Oncology	18	5
Nephrology	16	5
Respiratory Medicine	15	6
Clinical Pharmacology	13	2
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	13	3
Remaining specialties	82	37
Total	**398**	**112**

Table 3 – Clinical specialties of the award holders that reported publications in 2018/19.

Journal	Number of publications
The British Journal of Surgery	7
Trials	7
Europace	6
European Journal of Surgical Oncology	6
Schizophrenia Research	5
Allergy	4
Annals of Surgery	4
Blood	4
Circulation	4
European Journal of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery	4
Frontiers in Immunology	4
Journal of the American College of Cardiology	4
Liver Transplantation	4
Nature	4
Nature Communications	4
Plos One	4
Psychoneuroendocrinology	4
Remaining 226 journals	297
Total	**376**

Table 4 – Journals in which award holders published as reported in the 2018/19 window

To date, 260 Starter Grant award holders have reported a total of 2,052 publications. Figure 3 shows the number of publications reported on Researchfish to date, according to the year of publication. There was a small reduction in the number of publications produced in 2018 in comparison to the previous two years, however the number of publications remains high. Figure 4 shows the number of newly reported publications within each submission period, and shows that the number of newly reported publications increased in the latest submission window as compared to the previous period (2017/18). It is important to note that grant holders can capture outputs from any date within the submission period, including publications that were published before the submission window reporting period (before 1 April 2018). Of the 397 publications that were newly reported in the 2018/19 submission window, 125 publications were published before 1 April 2018, including 57 publications published in 2017. The overall number of articles published in 2018 is therefore likely to increase in future reports when publications from 2018 are reported within future reporting windows.

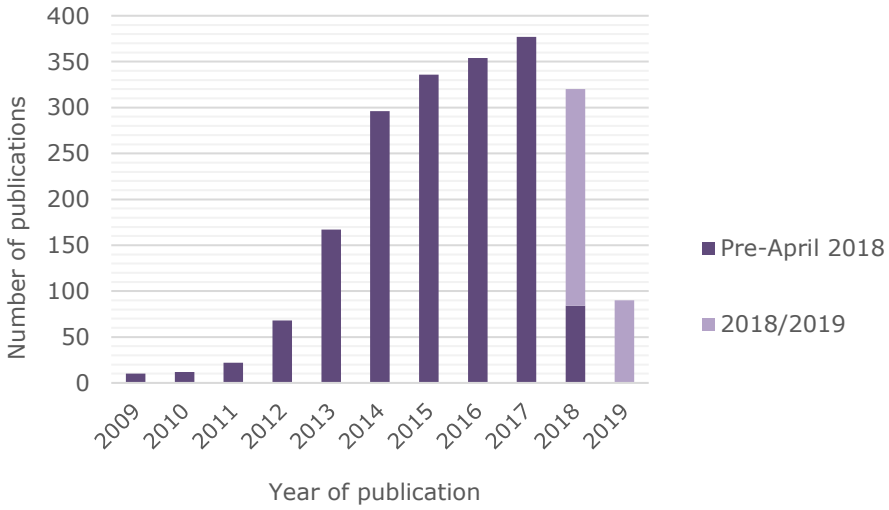


Figure 3 – Publications reported by Starter Grant award holders to date

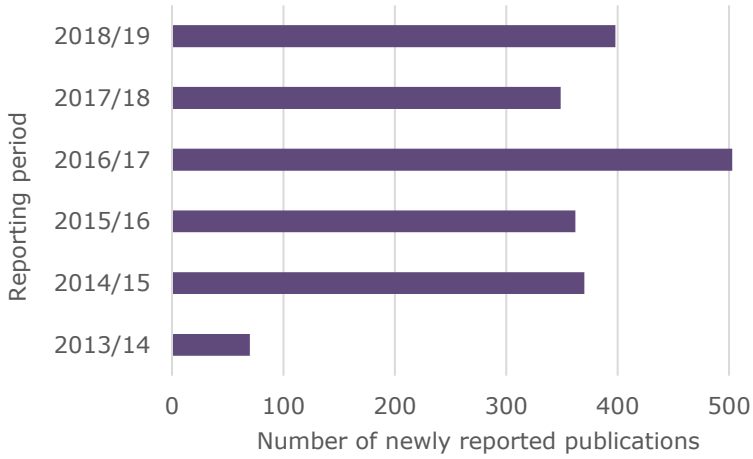


Figure 4 – Number of publications newly reported by Starter Grant award holders in each reporting window

Further funding

New outputs captured in the 2018/19 submission window:

- **£32.3M** of further funding was leveraged by 66 Starter Grant holders (a total of 104 grants).
- The gender split of the 66 grant holders is 42% female and 58% male; however, 49.65% of the funding was leveraged by female grant holders.
- **87.5%** of further funding awards came from UK-based organisations.
- The majority of funding awards came from the **charity/non-profit** and **public sectors** (52% and 35%, respectively).
- Starter Grant scheme funders contributed **£12.3M** (38%) of the further funding secured by award holders (Figure 7; Table 5).

Most of the further funding secured in 2018/19 comes from research grants and fellowships – together these award categories account for 77% of the number of further funding reported (Figure 5) and 96.4% of the overall amount of further funding received. The majority of the further funding awards were small grants, but Starter Grant holders also succeeded in securing large research grants and fellowships – 19% of the awards had a value exceeding £500K (Figure 6). It should be noted that, in the case of collaborative awards where they are listed as coinvestigators, grant holders are asked to only report their share of the grant.

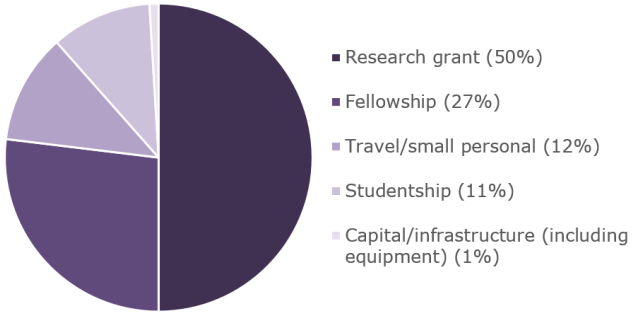


Figure 5 – Type of funding received as reported in 2018/19

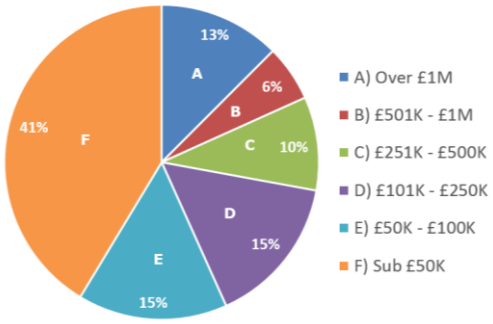


Figure 6 – Value of individual funding received as reported in 2018/19

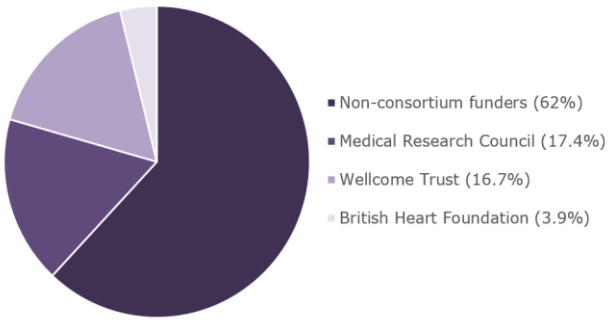


Figure 7 – Starter Grants consortium funder contributions to further funding reported in 2018/19

Organisation	Sum of award(s)
National Institute for Health Research	£8,670,976*
Medical Research Council	£5,627,395
Wellcome Trust	£5,401,283
European Commission	£2,287,457
Cancer Research UK	£1,385,488
British Heart Foundation	£1,249,541
University of Oxford	£869,000
Chief Scientist Office	£800,000
LAB282	£550,000
Prostate Cancer UK	£500,000
Remaining 55 funders	£4,945,780
Grand Total	**£32,286,920**

Table 5 – Top ten organisations providing further funding to Starter Grant holders in 2018/19. (*): figure includes a £1.9M grant awarded to a research consortium

Starter Grant holders from rounds 11, 13 and 18 (awarded in June 2014, June 2015 and December 2017) were the most successful in their funding bids, securing 34 grants and receiving over £16M, which corresponds to 49.6% of the overall further funding received as reported within the 2018/19 submission window.

To date, 62% of 359 Starter Grant holders that have reported via Researchfish have successfully received further funding for an overall total of **£142.4M.**

"I received my Starter Grant at the start of my Academic Clinical Lectureship, when I had the time but not the funds to take my research forward. The grant helped me pump prime my research and acquire preliminary data, through which I was awarded an NIHR Fellowship and subsequently a Medical Research Foundation Emerging Leaders Prize. I have been able to take forward and develop my research aims, which have broadened based on new opportunities and discoveries."
Dr Tracy Briggs, Starter Grant held at the University of Manchester (Round 11)

Career progression

New outputs captured in the 2018/19 submission window:

- Starter Grant holders reported securing **18** large personal fellowships (Table 6), of which there were:
  - **12** Clinician Scientist Fellowships.
  - **six** senior post-doctoral clinical fellowships.
- **39** grant holders secured other promotions, with **82%** of these being research-active roles, e.g. Senior Clinical Lecturer.
- Grantees secured **11** studentships for junior researchers working with them.

Round	Funding body and award name
Clinician Scientist Fellowships (or equivalent)	
11	Medical Research Council, Clinician Scientist Fellowship
11	Wellcome Trust, Clinical Research Career Development Fellowship
11	Cancer Research UK, Clinician Scientist Fellowship
11	Chief Scientist Office, Scottish Senior Clinical Fellowship
12	National Institute for Health Research, Clinician Scientist Award
12	British Heart Foundation, Intermediate Clinical Research Fellowship
13	Medical Research Council, Clinician Scientist Fellowship
13	Medical Research Council, Clinician Scientist Fellowship
13	Imperial College/Wellcome Trust Institutional Strategic Support Fund, Clinician Scientist Fellowship
14	Wellcome Trust, Clinical Research Career Development Fellowship
17	British Heart Foundation, Intermediate Clinical Fellowship
18	Wellcome Trust, Clinical Research Career Development Fellowship
Senior Postdoctoral Fellowships	
11	Wellcome Trust, Clinical Research Career Development Fellowships
11	Wellcome Trust, Clinical Research Career Development Fellowship
13	Medical Research Council, Skills Development Fellowship
15	Wellcome Trust, Clinical Research Career Development Fellowship
15	University of Manchester Presidential Fellowship
16	National Heart and Lung Institute, Senior Research Fellowship

Table 6 – Personal clinical fellowships secured by award holders, as reported in 2018/19.

The above awards take the total number of fellowships reported to us via Researchfish, to date, to 61 Clinician Scientist Fellowships (or equivalent) and 32 senior clinical postdoctoral fellowships. The number of fellowships and promotions secured by all the Starter Grants holders is, however, likely to be much higher. Fellowships and promotions are often secured following the completion of a Starter Grant (as shown in Figure 8), but most of the data from early rounds of the scheme (e.g. rounds 1-4) which closed before the adoption of Researchfish have never been captured. Figure 9 shows the current trend across different rounds, including a few entries from round 1-4 grant

holders, as reported to date. Most of the grant holders from early rounds (in particular rounds 5, 7, and 8) reported receiving a promotion. As per previous reports we expect this trend to evolve as awards mature and end.

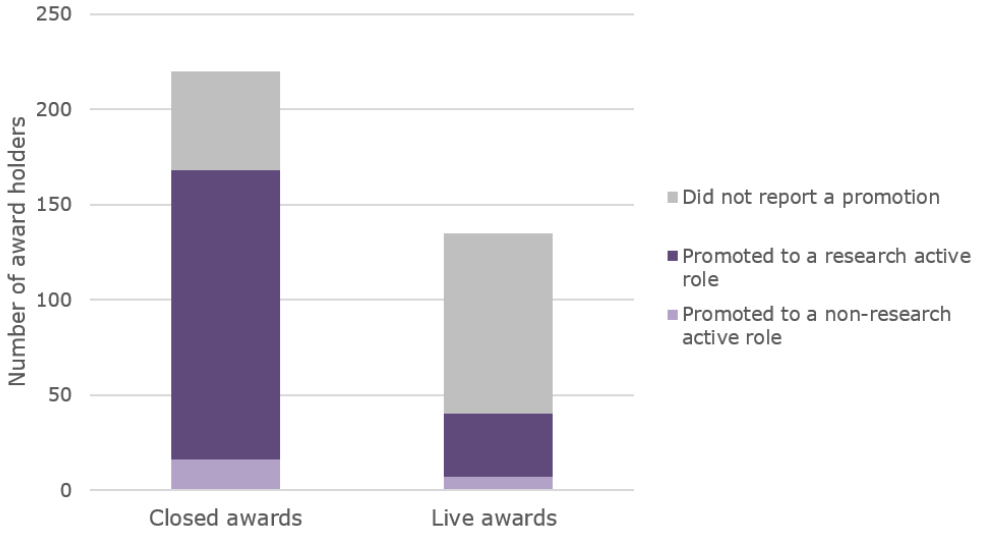


Figure 8 – Proportion of award holders as of 2018/19 who have reported securing a promotion based on award status.

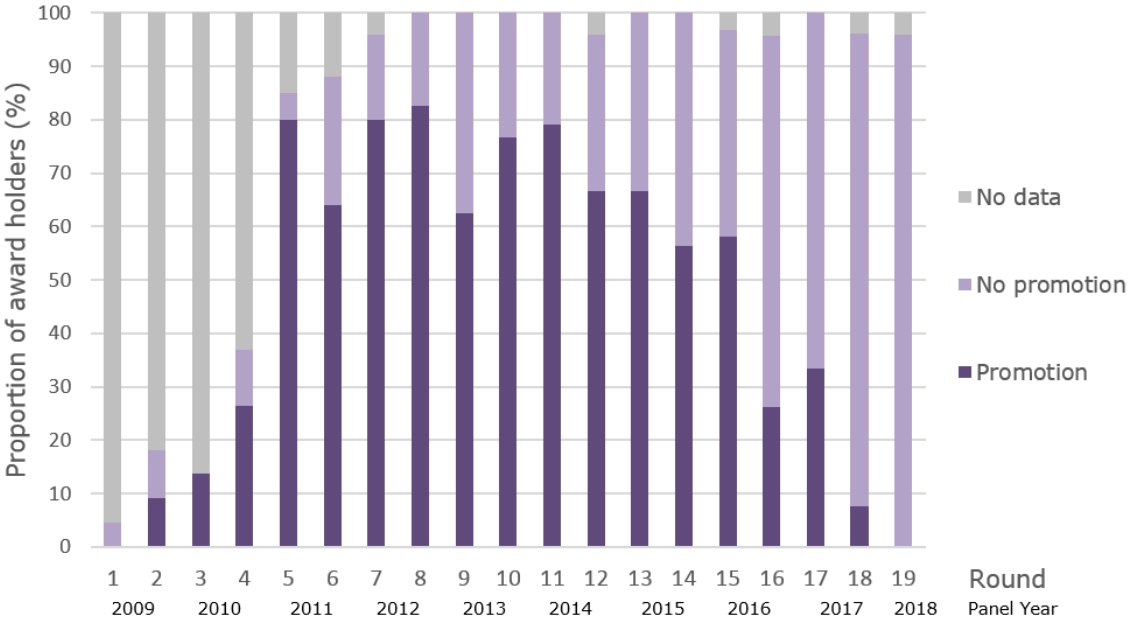


Figure 9 – Proportion of award holders each round reporting whether they have received a promotion

"*My Starter Grant award helped me start off as an independent clinical researcher investigating an area that has been of interest to me for a long time. It has allowed me to raise my research profile and generate some exciting data.*"
Dr Syed Ali Khurram, Starter Grant held at the University of Sheffield (Round 8)

Other outputs

In addition to publications, further funding and promotions, we also collect information on any collaborations forged by our Starter Grants holders, awards and prizes they have received, and any influences they have had on policy and practice. These outputs can serve as indicators of research quality and esteem, and are also of keen interest to us as they align with the Academy's careers policy activities and strategic priority of developing talented researchers.

Collaborations

New outputs captured in the 2018/19 submission window:
Award holders reported **43** new collaborations linked to their Starter Grant;

- Of these, **28** collaborations were initiated subsequent to their Starter grant.
- Most of the collaborations reported, 70%, were within the Academic/University sector (Figure 10).
- Collaborators were primarily UK-based (60%), while the remaining collaborations were with partners outside the UK. Of these, 19% were with collaborators based in Europe and 12% with collaborators based in North America (Figure 11).

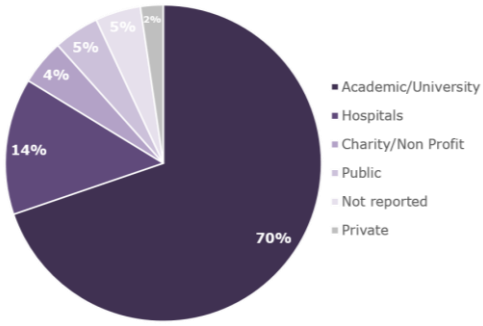


Figure 10 – Sector of newly reported collaborating partners in 2018/19.

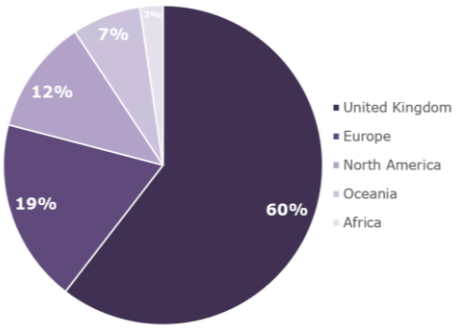


Figure 11 – Location of newly reported collaborating partners in 2018/19.

"*The award has provided a number of opportunities beyond the direct research project that it supported. An important outcome of the award has been building research networks and finding collaborators*."
Dr Terence Quinn, Starter Grant held at the University of Glasgow (Round 6)

Influences on policy and practice

New outputs captured in the 2018/19 submission window:

- Starter Grant holders reported **eight** new activities influencing policy and practice (Table 7).
- 75% of these influences were at a **national level**, with the remaining at an international level.

Type of influence	Instances
Influenced training of practitioners or researchers	3
Participation in an advisory committee	2
Membership of a guideline committee	2
Citation in clinical guidelines	1
Grand Total	8

Table 7 – New influences on policy and practice reported in 2018/19

To date, 52 of the 359 (14.5%) Starter Grant award holders who have submitted their Researchfish reports have reported a total of 104 policy and practice influences. The most frequently reported types were influencing the training of practitioners or researchers and participation in advisory committees.

Awards and recognition

New outputs captured in the 2018/19 submission window:

- **39** of the Starter Grant holders (15.7% of those reporting in this submission period) reported receiving **66** new awards or other markers of esteem and recognition (Table 8).
- Together, research prizes, personal invitations to speak at conferences and poster/abstract prizes accounted for the 79% of the instances reported.

Type of award	Instances
Research prize	21
Personally asked as a key note speaker to a conference	20
Poster/abstract prize	11
Awarded honorary membership, or a fellowship, of a learned society	6
Appointed as the editor/advisor to a journal or book series	4
Prestigious/honorary/advisory position to an external body	2
Medal	2
Grand Total	**66**

Table 8 – New awards and markers of esteem reported in 2018/19

To date, 165 of the 359 (46%) Starter Grant award holders whose awards have been captured on Researchfish reported a total of 461 awards and markers of esteem.

Furthermore, a number of Starter Grant holders have been involved in different development opportunities offered by the Academy:

- **203** grant holders accessed the Academy's one-to-one mentoring scheme and were paired with an Academy fellow or senior academic.
- **Four** grant holders were selected for the first round of the Future Leaders in Innovation, Enterprise and Research (FLIER) programme.
- **Seven** award holders participated in the SUSTAIN scheme, an innovative programme of training and support through mentoring, coaching and networking for female researchers.
- **146** grant holders (approximately one in three) attended the annual Winter Science Meeting, a multi-disciplinary conference for Starter Grant, Springboard and Newton International Fellowship award holders.

"*I consider this award to have been a vital first step in what I hope will be a successful independent research career. As well as being supported to pursue one's own ideas, I found the need to manage my own budget and support team to be an excellent challenge. The award has also helped me improve my academic profile locally and nationally.*"
Dr Rahul Bhatnagar, Starter Grant held at the University of Bristol (Round 15)

Case studies

In this section, we present case studies from selected Starter Grants holders. These case studies complement the quantitative analyses reported so far from the of Researchfish data by exploring single awards in greater detail.

The selected award holders were asked to complete a short questionnaire on the research that was supported through their Starter Grant and the impact that the award has had on their career.

Case studies were formed from the following awards:

- **Jessica Eccles**, University of Sussex (Round 16, 2016) – Project title: "*Applying leading-edge multimodal neuroimaging and neural connectivity tools to characterise brain mechanisms that link joint hypermobility to anxiety*"

- **Melanie Hezzell**, University of Bristol (Round 18, 2017) – Project title: "*Does surgical implantation of a novel bioprosthetic valved conduit in the right ventricular outflow tract affect right ventricular structure and function in healthy pigs?*"

- **Sarah Alderson**, University of Leeds (Round 17, 2017) – Project title: "*An interrupted time series analysis of the Campaign to Reduce Opioid Prescribing*"

Jessica Eccles

Starter Grant awarded in 2016
University of Sussex

Applying leading-edge multimodal neuroimaging and neural connectivity tools to characterise brain mechanisms that link joint hypermobility to anxiety

Can you give us an overview of your research interests?

I am a neuroscientist working on the interface between body and brain. My research seeks to understand how abnormalities of connective tissue and associated dysfunction of the involuntary nervous system lead to symptoms across body and brain that have a significant impact on the quality of life in people with conditions such as symptomatic hypermobility (hEDS/HSD), postural tachycardia syndrome, fibromyalgia and ME/CFS. The ultimate aim of my research is to trial and test novel targeted treatments for people with these conditions.

What is the aim of your Starter Grant project?

I wanted to extend on from the work that I carried out during my PhD, where I used leading edge brain imaging techniques to look at autonomic function and fMRI in joint hypermobility. With my Starter Grant I want to apply a new imaging methodology to investigate how differences in body physiology are linked to the clinical expression of psychiatric symptoms at the neuronal level.

What most appealed to you about the Starter Grant scheme?

I applied for a Starter Grant to enhance my research and to further my career as a Clinical Lecturer. I was also keen to get funding to learn about a new technique to implement in future grants and in my department at Brighton and Sussex Medical School. It has so far been an enriching experience and has enhanced my career considerably.

Through my Starter Grant award I have had the opportunity to attend both the Winter Science Meeting and the Spring Meeting (now CATAC), as well as participating in the Academy's mentoring scheme. I was also given the opportunity to create a video about my research, which has been hugely important in helping me engage and connect with patients.

What do you find most satisfying about medical research, and what are the biggest challenges?

I enjoy linking research to clinical practice and helping to build the science that seeks to understand conditions which are frequently overlooked or dismissed, but that have a significant impact on quality of life. The biggest challenge is balancing competing time demands when combining academic work with clinical practice, but it is important to do so as one compliments the other.

Career highlights

- MQ/Versus Arthritis Fellowship award to conduct a randomised trial of a novel targeted treatment for anxiety in hypermobility
- Royal College of Psychiatrists Liaison Faculty prize (2017)
- Invited speaker at the British Neuropsychiatric Association Annual Meeting (2019)
- Lead on a large study exploring mechanisms of chronic pain and fatigue in fibromyalgia and ME/CFS

Melanie Hezzell

Starter Grant awarded in 2017
University of Bristol

Does surgical implantation of a novel bioprosthetic valved conduit in the right ventricular outflow tract affect right ventricular structure and function in healthy pigs?

Can you give us an overview of your research interests?

I am a specialist Veterinary Cardiologist, and I am fascinated by the interface between veterinary cardiology and heart disease in people; it is a greatly underexplored area for research and all cardiologists can learn a great deal from one another, whether their patients are humans or animals. The study being supported by my Starter Grant is designed to investigate the effects on the heart of an innovative new surgical technique for congenital heart disease, which affects around 4,600 babies born each year in the UK. I am using a combination of cardiac MRI, echocardiography and transcriptomic analysis of myocardial samples to investigate how the heart responds to the surgery in a pig model, which will inform the future application of the technique in children.

What has the impact of your Starter Grant been so far?

My grant has given me the exciting opportunity to work with a team of paediatric surgeons and basic scientists who are developing highly innovative techniques to treat congenital heart disease in children. The scheme has provided me with invaluable support as I develop towards independence in my research career.
I've had the chance to participate in a wide range of Academy activities, including attending Winter Science Meetings, which have been a fantastic opportunity to network with researchers from other institutions. I've also joined the mentoring scheme, which has provided me with the opportunity and space to discuss my research, career and challenges with someone outside my institution and immediate field, which has been very valuable in helping me to plan for the future.

What do you find most satisfying about medical research, and what are the biggest challenges?

Although data analysis fills many medical researchers with dread, I love the moments when the numbers suddenly resolve to provide me with an insight into the disease. Being able to take these insights back into the clinic to improve the management of patients with cardiac disease brings the process full circle.
I think that most clinical academics will agree that the biggest challenge is effectively juggling all of one's responsibilities – I would often benefit from a few extra hours in each day!

Career highlights

- Invited lecture at the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine Annual Forum (2019)
- Publication of highly cited article in the Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine
- Awards for best oral cardiology research presentation at the European College of Veterinary Internal Medicine Congress (2013) and the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine Forum (2015).
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Sarah Alderson

Starter Grant awarded in 2017
University of Leeds

An interrupted time series analysis of the Campaign to Reduce Opioid Prescribing

Can you give us an overview of your research interests?

My research focuses on understanding behaviour and behaviour change in order to embed interventions, such as audit and feedback (A&F) interventions, targeting patients and professionals within primary care. I have been leading a feedback intervention, the Campaign to Reduce Opioid Prescribing (CROP), in primary care in West Yorkshire, comparing opioid prescription rates across practices and using behavioural change techniques to create maximal impact. With my Starter Grant I have been assessing the intervention, using routinely collected electronic health record data from primary care to analyse prescribing trends during the year of the A&F intervention compared to the years before and after the intervention.

What appealed to you about the Starter Grant scheme, and what has been the impact so far?

Before I applied for the scheme I had not lead a grant as a Chief Investigator. The scheme allowed me to apply for funding for research that now forms a larger programme of work that I am leading, and has provided a very helpful stepping stone along the way. My Starter Grant has been transformational in shaping my career, it has provided me with the support and experience to develop a solid foundation of research skills and expertise. Through my Starter Grant award I have had the chance to participate in the Academy's mentoring scheme, and to present my work at the Spring Meeting (now CATAC). I am also part of the SUSTAIN programme. These opportunities have allowed me to focus on my progression to becoming an independent clinical academic researcher, and have provided me with the 'soft skills' needed to be successful in clinical academia, such as negotiation and work-life balance.

What do you find most satisfying about medical research, and what are the biggest challenges that you face as a clinical academic?

Balancing the competing demands of clinical and academic work, and work and home life, is always a challenge. However, there are moments when you see quantifiable ways that your efforts have altered and shaped the lives of other human beings. Working in medicine, finding and addressing problems that are not answered by the current evidence and seeing your work being taken up into practice and policy to the benefits of patients is extremely satisfying.

Career highlights

- NIHR Clinical Trials Fellowship
- Invited speaker at the Audit and Feedback (A&F) international symposium to present an example of an effective feedback intervention
- Application for promotion to Associate Professor
- Delivery of CROP to other Clinical Commissioning Groups in Yorkshire and Humber to reduce potentially harmful opioid prescribing
- Member of the NIHR Yorkshire and Humber Applied Research Collaborative Improvement Science team.

Closing remarks

This report summarises the outputs and impact of our Starter Grant for Clinical Lecturers funding scheme, as reported by the award holders on the Researchfish platform in the latest submission period, between April 2018 and March 2019, along with cumulative Researchfish data since the adoption of the platform in 2013.

Data presented within this report demonstrated, as in previous reports, that these awards have had a significant impact on the career development of the Starter Grant holders funded so far. This is reflected by the vast amount of publications produced and further funding received, mostly in the form of personal research grants and fellowships. To date, for every £1 awarded to those Starter Grant holders who have reported on Researchfish (359 across all funding rounds) approximately £14 has been leveraged in further support. Furthermore, grant holders continue to be successful in terms of career progression, with increasing numbers of Clinician Scientist Fellowships, senior post-doctoral clinical fellowships and promotions to research-active roles secured. This continues to align with the purpose of the Starter Grant scheme in facilitating retention of early-career clinical lecturers in research-active roles. Grantees also widened their research networks by establishing numerous collaborations linked to their Starter Grant, across different sectors and locations worldwide.
Almost half of the Starter Grant holders were rewarded and recognised for the contribution they made to the research landscape, and many reported completing activities which influenced or will influence policy and practice.

The scheme has developed over time and has benefited from an expanding consortium of funders, which has collectively responded to the evolving landscape and has ensured the scheme remains fit for purpose.

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