

## SUSTAIN programme round eight – application guidelines

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## 1. Introduction

SUSTAIN is a programme designed to develop the skills that are important to enable female researchers to thrive in their independent research careers.

Supported by the Academy of Medical Sciences, the Medical Research Council, the Royal Society, and the Royal Academy of Engineering, we are offering places to 24 women on the seventh cohort of the programme.

Scientists and engineers from all disciplines are eligible to join SUSTAIN, provided they currently hold a qualifying award or fellowship from one of the funding organisations.

The Academy is committed to working towards equity, diversity and inclusion and we actively encourage applications from candidates with underrepresented protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

## 2. Programme content

SUSTAIN is part of the Academy's portfolio of activities aimed at developing talented researchers and it will include the following:

### ***Interactive career development workshops***

The programme will launch with an in-person residential at the Academy of Medical Sciences' Offices in London on **21-22 June 2023**, followed by a virtual mentoring workshop on 28 June 2023. The launch will offer an opportunity to meet other participants and take part in training for the mentoring and co-coaching aspects of the programme, as well as on broader career development topics. **Please note that to take up an offer of a place on the programme, you must be able to attend the launch and subsequent mentoring workshop.**

The June launch will be followed by a series of career development workshops spaced throughout the year. Each session will be tailored to support attendees through the challenges of combining research, teaching, clinical practice and caring and other responsibilities where relevant. Previous sessions have included topics on:

- Time management
- Negotiation
- Setting up a research team for success
- Developing your leadership style

The content will be developed in the coming months and will be tailored to the needs of the participants. The information you provide in your application form regarding areas that you are interested in covering will also feed into the content of the sessions.

### ***A peer support network***

The group will be matched in co-coaching triads to enable ongoing peer support and discussion of issues/challenges. Small group work at each workshop will help to embed and make learning practical.

### ***One-to-one mentoring***

SUSTAIN participants will be mentored by a Fellow of one of the academies. Bespoke training and ongoing support will be provided to both mentees and mentors over the course of the programme.

We promote a developmental model of mentoring to enable mentees to make critical career decisions.

Participants are asked to:

- 1) Attend an afternoon mentoring workshop on **28 June 2023**
- 2) Commit to meet their mentor regularly over the period of one year (meetings may be virtual),
- 3) Complete short feedback surveys at key points during the programme.

### 3. Who can apply

The programme is open to female scientists and engineers (including both clinical and non-clinical researchers) who hold an active award or fellowship from one of the partner organisations.

To be eligible to apply you must hold one of the following awards:

<b>Medical Research Council</b>	Career Development Award
	Clinician Scientist Fellowship
	MRC Investigators (Programme Leader Track only)
	Clinical Academic Partnership Grant
	New Investigator Research Grant (NIRGs)
<b>The Royal Society</b>	Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowship
	Sir Henry Dale Fellowship
	University Research Fellowship
<b>Academy of Medical Sciences</b>	Academy of Medical Sciences/The Health Foundation Clinician Scientist Fellowship
	Springboard Award
	Starter Grant Award for Clinical Lecturers
<b>Royal Academy of Engineering</b>	Research Fellow
	Engineering for Development Research Fellow

This award must be active at the time of your application. **All applicants must be available to participate in the career development workshops.** For the media training workshop, groups will be coordinated depending on participants' availability. Please see '**key dates**' section of this document for more details.

## 4. Key dates

Date	
1 March 2023	Applications open
22 March 2023	Applications close
Early April 2023	Applicants are notified about the outcome of the selection process
21-22 June 2023	Residential launch at Academy of Medical Sciences' venue 41 Portland Place, London. To include career development and the Inspiring Women Celebration on the evening of 21 June, featuring guest speakers and networking opportunities with other SUSTAIN participants and senior researchers
28 June 2023	Virtual mentor meeting – during this workshop you will meet the SUSTAIN Round 8 mentors and get to nominate your preferred choices.
4, 12, 17 October 2023	Media training workshop (full day event) – cohort split into three groups across different dates
February 2024	Virtual Career development workshop (two half days) – specific dates TBC
May 2024	Career development workshop and conclusion (full day event with evening celebration) – specific dates TBC

The full agenda for each event will follow for successful programme participants.

**Please note that we plan to offer a mixture of in-person, virtual, and hybrid events. In-person events are subject to safety regulations and government advice pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic, and will also take into account the preferences of programme participants closer to the time.**

## 5. Accommodation, travel and childcare

For any in-person events reasonable travel expenses will be covered, and hotel accommodation will be offered to all participants. This will typically be for the night before subsequent workshops, to help participants to avoid rush hour travel.

Childcare support, when additional care is required above normal provision, will be available up to £80 per child per day during the workshops. Participants will be able to claim childcare support by completing a form and providing appropriate receipts to the Academy.

## 6. Monitoring and evaluation

Feedback from participants will help us to assess the impact of SUSTAIN and inform future developments. **We expect participants to maintain close contact with the Academy and to complete feedback surveys after each workshop.**

The SUSTAIN programme is independently evaluated, and participants may be asked to complete surveys during or after the programme. You may also volunteer to provide further detail on your experience of SUSTAIN through interview or case studies.

## 7. Governance

The programme is overseen by a reference group. The role of this group is to advise the Academy on the development of SUSTAIN and oversee the application process as well as the evaluation of the programme.

Reference group members:

- Professor Christine Harrison FMedSci, Professor of Childhood Cancer Cytogenetics, Newcastle University (chair)
- Professor Eva Hoffman, Professor in Molecular Genetics, University of Copenhagen
- Professor Jim Smith FRS FMedSci, Director of Science, Wellcome and Visiting Group Leader, Francis Crick Institute
- Professor Elizabeth Sapey, Director of the Institute of Inflammation and Ageing, University of Birmingham and FLIER round two participant
- Dr Zania Stamataki, Senior Lecturer in Liver Immunology, University of Birmingham and SUSTAIN round one participant

## 8. Adjusted selection process for SUSTAIN Rounds 8 and 9

### Background and previous process

Selection for the SUSTAIN programme is randomised. For SUSTAIN rounds 1-7, the following selection process was used.

- Applicants were first separated out by funder, as each funder supports a different number of places.
- They were then further separated by UK region (golden triangle, rest of England, or devolved nations).
- Each participant within a sub-group was then assigned a number, and the necessary number of places was chosen through a random number generator.
- Additionally, as we have a high number of repeat applications, for rounds 6 and 7 we granted one extra entry per time an individual has applied for the program, to improve their chance of selection.

Although this previous process worked well and offered every applicant a fair chance of being selected, some flaws were identified in this process. Primarily, the randomness of the selection process sometimes did not result in diverse cohorts of SUSTAIN participants. The SUSTAIN programme was created to increase the participation of underrepresented groups at senior levels in Academia, and therefore the Academy is piloting an amended process for SUSTAIN Rounds 8 and 9, to ensure more researchers from underrepresented groups are able to access the programme.

### Selection process for SUSTAIN rounds 8 and 9

For SUSTAIN rounds the selection process will remain largely randomised, while ensuring a minimum number of places go to those who are further minoritised within academia. For SUSTAIN rounds 8 and 9, this will include individuals who identify as Neurodiverse, Disabled and/or Long-Term Impaired, Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic, and/or LGBTQ+. The new process has been developed with consultation with the Academy's ED&I Manager, Vivien Kintu, and alongside all programme funders. The new process is as follows:

- Addition of a short section to the SUSTAIN application form, explaining that we are committed to ensuring greater representation of researchers from underrepresented groups within SUSTAIN cohorts.
- A short question asking applicants to tick a box if they identify as having specific protected characteristics. For the pilot process in rounds 8 and 9 this will include ethnicity, sexuality, and disability. Completion of this section of the form will be optional.
- We will first select one third of available places from the pool of applicants with protected characteristics (still stratifying by funder as above). The number of places this equates to for each funder is as follows:
  - Medical Research Council: three places
  - Royal Society: three places
  - Academy of Medical Sciences: two places
  - Royal Academy of Engineering: one place

- Any unselected participants from this group would go back into the general applicant pool. We will then randomly select from this general pool for the remaining number of places.

This is a new approach that the Academy believes is fair and balanced, and meets the intended aims of the SUSTAIN programme. We do however recognise that this marks a significant change from the previous process, and so are piloting this new process for SUSTAIN Rounds 8 and 9 only. Following these SUSTAIN rounds we will explore whether the new approach has been effective and amend our processes as needed. If you would like to give any feedback on the process or have further questions, please contact [SUSTAIN@acmedsci.ac.uk](mailto:SUSTAIN@acmedsci.ac.uk). You can also learn more about the Academy's approach to ED&I [here](#).

A total of 24 places are available for SUSTAIN Round 8. The selection process will be overseen by the SUSTAIN reference group chair, Professor Christine Harrison FMedSci, Professor of Childhood Cancer Cytogenetics, Newcastle University. The decision of the Academy is final.

**Notification of decisions regarding SUSTAIN applications will be made in early April 2023**



## 9. Guidance notes for completing the application form

Please complete and submit an online application by **16.00 BST on Wednesday 22 March 2023** through our Flexi-Grant portal <https://acmedsci.flexigrant.com/>. If you have not used Flexi-Grant before, you will need to register and create a new user account.

This section guides you through completing the online application form for the SUSTAIN programme. Some notes on completing the form are integrated into the form itself.

### Save and resume

Once you have started a section, you can click save at the bottom and log out of Flexi-Grant; your responses in that section will be saved. To return to your application log in to <https://acmedsci.flexigrant.com/>, click on 'My Account' in the top right corner, and select 'My Applications' to resume.

### Submitting your application

When you have completed all sections of the application form a 'Submit application' button will become available at the bottom of the summary page which you will need to click to finalise the application. Once your application has been submitted, you will be able to view your application and its current status, but you will not be able to modify it. You can also download your form as a PDF at any point to keep for your records.

Each applicant should provide the following:

**Section 1** - Your personal information: name, contact details, institution and job title. You will also have the option to let us know if you identify as having some specific protected characteristics. We will use this information to increase the proportion of researchers from underrepresented groups taking part in SUSTAIN. Please note that completion of this section of the form is optional.

**Section 2** - Select the applicable researcher category. This information will be used to stratify applications.

**Section 3** - Select your current research award. Your award must be active at the time of applying to the programme.

**Section 4** - Information about why you are interested in SUSTAIN and any particular areas of career development you would like us to cover. **Your answer does not affect the selection process.** The information from selected participants is used to help us to further develop and tailor the programme of activities during the year.

**Section 5** - Monitoring and marketing feedback. On this page we request monitoring and marketing information. Please note that monitoring information will not be used in the selection process. We request this information to monitor the Academy's activities with respect to the beneficiaries of proposals and awards, and the gender, ethnic origin and disability status of applicants will be kept anonymous. Marketing information is requested to help us monitor the effectiveness of our marketing activities. This information is also not used in the application review process.

**If you have any questions or would like to highlight any specific information with respect to your application, please contact the Academy team at [SUSTAIN@acmedsci.ac.uk](mailto:SUSTAIN@acmedsci.ac.uk).**

### ***The Academy of Medical Sciences***

The Academy of Medical Sciences is the independent body in the UK representing the diversity of medical science. Our vision is to improve health through research and our mission is to promote medical science and its translation into benefits for society. Find out more: [www.acmedsci.ac.uk](http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk)

### ***Medical Research Council***

The UK's Medical Research Council mission is to improve human health through world-class medical research. To achieve this, the council supports research across the biomedical spectrum, from fundamental lab-based science to clinical trials, and in all major disease areas. Find out more: [www.mrc.ukri.org](http://www.mrc.ukri.org)

### ***The Royal Society***

The Royal Society is the national academy of science in the UK whose vision is to recognise, promote, and support excellence in science and to encourage the development and use of science for the benefit of humanity. Find out more: [www.royalsociety.org](http://www.royalsociety.org)

### ***The Royal Academy of Engineering***

As the UK's national academy for engineering and technology, the Royal Academy of Engineering brings together the most talented and successful engineers – our Fellows – to advance and promote excellence in engineering for the benefit of society. Find out more: [www.raeng.org.uk/](http://www.raeng.org.uk/)