



The Kennedy Trust for Rheumatology Research
Senior Research Fellowship

Background

The Kennedy Trust's mission is to provide financial and other support for basic and translational research into musculoskeletal diseases. The Trust focuses on unmet needs, with the longer-term objective of its resources helping to achieve a meaningful impact in the development of cures and preventative treatment.

The Trust has, for many years, focused its funding on the work of the Kennedy Institute of Rheumatology at the University of Oxford. In recent years, however, the Trust has reviewed its strategy and expanded the scope of its funding beyond the Institute, with the primary aim of supporting people and young scientists. Having launched its Senior Research Fellowship scheme in 2016, the Trust has awarded six Fellowships to the Universities of Birmingham, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Leeds, Manchester and University College London.

Fellowship

The five-year Fellowship of up to £1.5m will be awarded in any scientific discipline relevant to the field of rheumatology or related musculoskeletal disease. Candidates will be researchers with a proven track record of excellence in their field who are at the stage of developing their own independent area of research; they should not currently hold a permanent academic position. The Trust would particularly encourage universities to use this opportunity to strengthen their research portfolio in the musculoskeletal sciences either by nominating an internal candidate or by recruiting a new investigator from the UK or overseas. The Fellowships are included in the Royal Society's list of accelerated fellowship providers, meaning that a successful overseas candidate would be eligible to apply for a fast-tracked Global Talent Visa under the 'exceptional promise' category for potential research leaders. The Trust would like to see clear evidence of meaningful support by the host institutions for their selected candidate. This may include direct financial support, PhD studentships or support staff, as well as other indirect contributions such as mentoring. This aspect will be considered carefully by the Panel when assessing each application. It is also the expectation of the Kennedy Trust that successful candidates will be offered a longer-term position by the employing institution at the end of the Fellowship.

Application Process

Each institution is asked to undertake a competitive review prior to selecting the candidate they wish to put forward for this Fellowship. The Fellowship is not renewable.

Funding will cover salary (in line with the host institution's career structure for a researcher with equivalent experience) together with support staff costs, consumable and facilities expenses, travel and publications. A start up allowance for equipment may also be included. A 2.5% allowance for inflation may be included in the budget as the Trust will not supplement the grant once awarded. The Trust does not pay indirect costs.

The application must consist of:

1. The Application form
2. The Applicant's CV
3. A supporting statement by the Host Head of Department

Guidance notes

1. The Application Form

A. Project Description (maximum 10 pages A4)

i. Background to the proposal

Please set out the context to the proposal together with a summary of your research over the last five years and the work which has led to this proposal. Also include a description of your most important scientific contributions to date.

ii. Aims and objectives

Set out the research questions you plan to address and explain why these are important. Also set out your short and long-term objectives and describe how these will advance the field.

iii. Plan of investigation

Provide a detailed plan of investigation, including a description of the approach to be taken and details of any milestones. Graphs and figures may be embedded in the text as appropriate.

B. Scientific References

Please provide citations in full, including title of paper and key authors.

C. Budget Details

Provide a full breakdown of costs being applied for. An allowance of up to 2.5%pa for inflation may be included as the Trust will not supplement the grant once awarded. All equipment and animal costs should be separately identified. The Trust does not pay indirect costs.

D. Justification for Resources Requested (max 1000 words)

Explain how the proposed Fellowship salary has been arrived at. Also provide details of the roles and responsibilities of any support staff being applied for and justification for non-staff costs. Where animal costs are being applied for, please explain why these are necessary. Explain why any equipment is needed and why it cannot be provided by the host institution.

E. Expected impact (maximum 500 words)

Briefly summarise the expected impact of your Fellowship, both within academia and across wider society. Explain how you will measure and maximise this impact.

F. Host institution support (maximum 500 words)

Provide details of how your host institution will demonstrate its commitment towards supporting the Fellowship and your future career trajectory. It will be important that this corresponds with the letter of support to be provided by your host institution.

G. Intellectual property (maximum 500 words)

Is your proposal likely to produce new IP? If yes, provide information on the IP potential of your research and explain your IP management plan. Also provide details of any existing IP associated with the proposal (if applicable).

H. Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (maximum 500 words)

Provide details of how you will involve and engage with patients and the public. This could include, for example, consultations and/or collaborations with patients in developing your application. This may also include proposed area or methods of research and your plans to disseminate your research outputs to a wide and diverse audience.

I. Details of Proposed Collaborators and Mentors (max 500 words)

Provide details of collaborations you expect with either academia or industry, including names and a brief outline of how that collaboration will work and its benefits. Also provide the names of any individuals who have agreed to mentor you during your Fellowship and a brief summary of the support that would be available.

J. Personal Statement (max 300 words)

Set out your reasons for applying for this Fellowship and how you expect to benefit from it.

K. Use of animals

We expect our funded researchers to adhere to the cross-funder [guidance](#) on the use of animals in research produced by the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) and the [Kennedy Trust Policy on the Use of Animals in Research](#). This section is mandatory for all applications for funding.

L. Research involving humans

Only complete this section if it is applicable to your application. On 16 April 2018, Health Research Authority (HRA) Approval became HRA and Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW) Approval and now applies to all project-based research taking place in the NHS in England and Wales. HCRW approval applies where the NHS organisation has a duty of care to participants, either as patients/service users or NHS staff/volunteers. References to participants include people whose data or tissue is involved in a research project. If your project is led from Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales and involves NHS/HSC sites then you will not apply to the HCRW. You should apply through the appropriate NHS/HSC permission process for that lead nation.

2. Applicant's CV

Please include a list of publications from the last three years plus up to five key prior publications (with citations in full). Also list all grants held in the last five years (including name of awarding body, title of project, start and end dates, and value of award).

3. Host Head of Department Supporting Statement

This should include a description of how the Fellowship would fit into the host institution and the support and resources which will be made available to the holder. It should also provide an indication of the plans for the continued employment of the fellow after the end of the award. A brief description of the selection process for identifying the candidate being put forward by the institution should also be provided.

The Head of Department or other relevant sponsor for the host institution will be asked to meet with the Review Panel as part of the application review process, should the applicant be invited to interview.

Timescales

If you intend to apply for a Senior Research Fellowship, we ask that you submit an [Expression of Interest](#) at your earliest opportunity, but no later than **15th December 2025**.

Full applications, including the completed application form, CV and supporting statement should be sent by email to submissions@kennedytrust.org to arrive by **5pm on Wednesday 28th January 2026**.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited for interview by an international panel of experts in London (appropriate travel expenses will be met). **Interviews are likely to be held the second half of May 2026** (dates will be confirmed in early 2026). Virtual interviews will be considered where a candidate is unable to travel to London.

The outcome of the call will be announced in **July 2026**.

All applications will be handled in the strictest confidence by the Trust and according to the Trust's [privacy policy](#). Any questions should be directed to submissions@kennedytrust.org.