



Guidance notes for completion and assessment of AO UK Research Grants

Introduction

The current round of AO UK research grants are intended to provide “pump priming” funds for research projects undertaken by trainee’s across all disciplines, supported by AO UK activity.

Essentially we hope that these grants will go towards the completion of MSc, MRes, MD or PhD projects. The sums on offer range up to £10,000 for a particular application. Please pay particular attention to the structure of the form. You will note that the form is laid out in a series of text limited boxes. The text limited boxes cannot be interfered with and the number of characters prescribed cannot be altered. Some of the boxes are free text such as “name of lead applicant”, “details of project supervisors” etc. It is essential that the project supervisors named sign the forms.

Applications must be accompanied by proof that ethical and local R&D approval has been obtained, or explicit explanation by the proposed project supervisors why such approval is not required. AO UK Research will not stand as sponsor for any of the supported projects. Where Ethics/NHS NHS R&D approval has yet to be granted, the current stage of the application must be made clear and allowance for this must to be included in the timeline. Supporting documents/letters must bear the appropriate signatures and be attached as PDF documents to the application.

Project Title:

This should be concise and aimed to encapsulate what the lead applicant is intending to achieve with the project

Abstract:

Once again, concise presentation is essential. The abstract should introduce the reader to the importance of the area studied, the aim of the study, methodology and anticipated benefits.

Introduction:

The introduction should clearly introduce the reader who may have no previous knowledge of the subject area concerned to the importance of the research question about to be proposed.



Research Question:

This should be a question and simply that. However, the introduction should set this in context and prepare the reader for subsequent aims etc.

Aims:

This should be a simple list of the exact aims of the study.

Methods:

The methods section should have a detailed description of study methodology, whether this will be a purely observational study or based upon some form of intervention. Whether this will be laboratory/biomechanical based or have some other contact with patients etc.

Anticipated Benefits:

Anticipated benefits should spell out clearly and concisely why answering the research question will enhance knowledge, safety, patient care etc.

Bibliography - Harvard system:

The bibliography should be presented in Harvard system, as this is the standard method in academic work.

Study Plan and Timeline:

There is no text limit for the study plan and timeline, however, as the funding is anticipated to be spread across a given period of time, stipulated by the lead applicant, then the study should be described in terms of starting points and various goals to be achieved in a period of 12 months or 24 months, whatever is relevant to the individual applicant. It is imperative that this is clear.

Include here the details of where the research will be undertaken (laboratory, clinical setting etc). Where ever possible, a formal Gantt Chart should be used to plot the progress of the proposed project. A simple introduction to Gantt Charts can be found at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gantt_chart. Successful applicants progress will be measured against this chart and funding may be withheld/withdrawn if progress is not satisfactory.

Justification of Expenses:

A clear and concise summary of how the grant application will be spent should be included.

Assessment:

The applications will be assessed by a range of assessors who will have no direct input to the applications under consideration.

Each section will be marked from 0 to 3:

- 0 - being awarded where the reviewer feels that the presented information is obscure or difficult to understand.



- 1 & 2 – for increasing merit and clarify
- 3 – for outstanding clarity, relevance etc.

This will enable us to generate a short list relatively easily on the scores acquired.

Administration:

Neither purchase of computer hardware, degree fees, nor salary expenses of the lead applicant will be supported by the AOUK Research Grant. Permissible expenses will include laboratory consumables, implant hardware, and in exceptional cases specialised software for data analysis. The activity of supporting staff whose contribution to the project is indispensable will be considered plus the costs of imaging when required. Note that this will not encompass full economic costing of this support. Reasonable travel expenses for the lead applicant to present research findings, or those incurred by patients in the course of the study will also be considered.

Successful applicants will receive a Memorandum of Understanding, which must be completed and signed by the Lead Applicant, along with their supervisors. The awarded sum may only be paid into research accounts. For staged payments, amounts may be varied (increased or decreased) to reflect the progress made by the study. The total available amount will remain unchanged. The study funded must commence within 6 months of the date of the signature of the Chairman AOUK R&PD on the Memorandum of Understanding. Funding will be withdrawn if this is not the case. The Lead Applicant commits to completing the template to post their project on the AOUK Website and to updating this with details of publications, higher degrees completed and results after the conclusion of the project. The Lead Applicant will fully acknowledge the financial support received from AOUK on all publications and submissions to meetings.

Major Grants will be paid in three roughly equal instalments spaced across the duration of the study. The initial payment will be made following signing of the contract between AOUK Research & the successful applicant and their supervisor(s), and upon receipt of proof of project commencement, the second upon receipt of a report detailing the goals achieved as stated in the original application, and defined in the contract. The final instalment paid only upon approval of the final report of the study. Payments will only be made with receipt of proofs of expenditure, and failure to provide such proofs will void any future payments and terminate the support from AOUK Research. Project Grants may be paid as single sums.