

# Research Career Development Grant 2024

## Top tips and FAQs

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists Research Foundation has offered a range of annual research grants annually since 2007. Over the years, 204 proposals have been submitted and 64 grants have been awarded. Each year, the Research Foundation Advisory Group highlights points for general feedback to applicants. We have developed these points into a list of 'top tips' and FAQs which we hope will be helpful as you prepare your application.

### Top Tips

- Seek advice early. If you are a doctoral student, discuss with your supervisor whether it is the right time to apply for a grant.
- Consider whether the size of your proposed project is appropriate for the funding available; pay close attention to all financial elements.
- Consider whether your proposal represents good value for money.
- Be realistic about what can be achieved, and not too ambitious. Build on your existing research strengths.
- Consider how applicable your proposed project is to occupational therapy and what the benefit will be to the profession. Describe how your proposal addresses one or more of the Top 10 research priorities for occupational therapy in the UK (<https://www.rcot.co.uk/top-10>).
- Make it explicit within your proposal what you are intending to do and how you will do it. Keep it simple and focused – include sufficient detail and ensure it is clearly explained.
- Ensure that your proposal is methodologically sound and include all aspects of the method within your application. Refer to the theoretical framework underpinning your methodology as well as the method itself. Include theoretical framework(s) from other countries and cultures, where appropriate.
- Think about the participant population and how you can ensure diverse populations are included.
- Where your application relates to an activity nested within a larger project, you must be able to clearly identify the discrete element that will be supported by the RCOT Research Foundation grant.
- Ensure the proposal demonstrates that there is appropriate and relevant support from an experienced researcher (who may be the co-applicant) to ensure the project's successful completion.
- Think broadly about the potential for relevant partnerships, given the scope of occupational therapy interests.

- Consider inclusion of people with lived experience as co-applicants. Be clear within your proposal where people with lived experience and/or their families or carers have had input into the research design and how they will be involved in the research. Ensure you are compensating people with lived experience at the [NIHR recommended rates](#). State how you will ensure a diversity of perspectives are included.
- Adhere to the application form completion criteria, particularly word limits and font size. Don't append additional documents as these will not be read. All essential facts should be included within the proposal form.
- Obtain your manager's support if any of the proposed research activity will be undertaken within the workplace.
- Allow time to have your proposal peer reviewed prior to submission. Doctoral applicants must have their supervisor peer review the proposal. Note this does not need to be completed using RCOT's reviewer form.
- Be mindful of the submission criteria and deadline, and allow sufficient time for obtaining signatures of any co-applicants, calculation of financial costings and any institutional sign off required.
- The ability to commence work promptly is an advantage, but you will need to propose a realistic start date. In determining the proposed project start date, factor in sufficient time for grant contract negotiation and sign off. This could take two to three months following confirmation of a successful outcome.
- Understand the expected deliverables required if your proposal is successful.

## FAQs

**Q: Is it necessary to have a co-applicant to apply for a Research Career Development Grant?**

A: No, it is not necessary to include a co-applicant in your application, but you should consider whether you need mentorship, additional expertise or support to carry out your research.

**Q: Will the RCOT Research Foundation support research activities based outside the UK?**

A: Yes, the RCOT Research Foundation welcomes and has funded projects with an international collaboration, but proposals must be aligned to one or more of the Top 10 priorities for occupational therapy in the UK, reflect UK local and national policy and offer outcomes to benefit UK practice and service delivery, and people accessing those services.

**Q: I am interested in applying for a Research Career Development Grant to support my doctoral studies. At what point should I consider applying?**

A: The proposal form for the Research Career Development Grant must include a good description of your research study, your proposed methodology and data analysis. You also need to demonstrate the likely impact of the research for the profession, the role of people with lived experience in the research and provide a breakdown of the funding you need. It is unlikely that you will have this detail before you start your doctorate, so a more appropriate

time to consider applying might be once your research proposal has been agreed with the university. We expect that your doctoral supervisor will read and comment on your proposal before you submit it and must give their support via a signature on the application form.

**Q: I am applying for a Research Career Development Grant to support my doctoral studies. Should I include my supervisor as a co-applicant?**

A: It is not necessary to have your doctoral supervisor included as a co-applicant, although it is possible. However, there is no expectation that your supervisor's time will be costed into the proposal. **At a minimum** we expect them to have peer reviewed the proposal, and they must give their support via a signature on the application form.

**Q: What funding aspects can be included within my costings for a proposed Research Career Development Grant?**

A: We expect the funding section of the application form to include actual costs related to undertaking the project – for example, staff time costs (salary/grade), administrative costs and materials. Doctoral students may apply for support towards future course fees. As a registered charity we don't expect to fund institution overheads. The RCOT Research Foundation Advisory Group will discuss whether the costs proposed seem reasonable for the work planned.

**Q: Should I consider the implications of the COVID pandemic when submitting my application?**

A: We are still encouraging applicants to continue to think creatively and consider new ways of working and how people are adapting their research and methods after the impact of the COVID pandemic. If you are proposing online or virtual engagement with participants, you should show that you have considered aspects of digital poverty and equitable access. If you are proposing in-person data collection, it is worth having some flexibility and contingency planning.

**Q: Should inflation be included in the costs for a RCOT Research Foundation grant? If so, at what rate?**

A: Yes, inflation should be accounted for at your institution's standard rate.

**Q: Would attendance at a conference be covered by a RCOT Research Foundation grant?**

A: Yes, subject to an overall maximum of £1K for a Research Career Development Grant.

**Q: Can I nominate external reviewers from within my institution?**

A: Yes – but you mustn't nominate your PhD supervisor or anyone from your department or whose involvement in the review process would be a conflict of interest. Additionally, you shouldn't nominate someone who is an employee of RCOT or someone you have conducted research with recently. Ideally, your reviewer would have a doctorate or equivalent practice experience. Please ask for permission from those you nominate as external reviewers before putting their names forward.

**Q: What do you mean by peer review?**

A: By peer review we mean that someone outside of your research team, but with research experience, has reviewed your application prior to its submission.

### Further help and advice

If you would like to discuss your project proposal, particularly if you are unsure if it is the right time to submit a grant application or if you have a question about the application process, please contact Angie Thompson, RCOT R&D Officer, in the first instance at: [angie.thompson@rcot.co.uk](mailto:angie.thompson@rcot.co.uk) or telephone: 020 3141 4615.

Additionally, Dr Phillip Whitehead, previous Research Foundation grant holder and NIHR panel member, has created a helpful webinar providing information on writing good grant proposals. You can find it on our [website](#), under the heading 'Helpful webinar'.

### Finally ....

You can find other funding opportunities through the R&D Bulletin and discuss research opportunities and issues with other RCOT members via Research Connect, a closed LinkedIn group. You can find out how to access both here: <https://www.rcot.co.uk/practice-resources/research-and-development#research-networking>.