RN I.D



PhD Studentship Grants 2023 Call and Guidelines

RNID and the Anatomical Society are working together to fund PhD studentships in 2023. Their aim is to raise awareness of the importance of hearing research and the role of anatomical science in improving our understanding of hearing loss.

Through our PhD Studentship grants, we aim to encourage the best students to become involved in hearing and tinnitus research in the UK (and for this year's scheme, also in Ireland).

The importance of hearing research

Hearing loss is a life-changing condition that affects 1 in 5 adults in the UK. With a population that is getting older, it is also a growing problem, as much of this hearing loss is age-related. By 2035, it is estimated that 15.6 million people in the UK will have hearing loss, placing a huge burden on society and the economy. Hearing loss also affects children; there are 50,000 children in the UK with hearing loss – half are born with it, and half lose their hearing during childhood.

Hearing loss can have a severe impact on people's quality of life and leads to isolation from friends and family. It is also associated with dementia, depression, and decreased physical wellbeing, and can hinder both education and employment.

Current medical interventions are largely limited to hearing aids and cochlear implants. While these devices bring benefit to many people who use them, they do not reproduce the richness of natural hearing and can perform poorly when there is a high level of background noise. There is an urgent need to improve existing technologies and find new interventions to prevent hearing loss and restore hearing.

To develop better treatments, we need to improve our understanding of the anatomy of the entire auditory system, at all levels, from system to intracellular, and at all stages of the lifespan, from development to ageing.

We therefore request research projects in the following areas:

1) Research to underpin the development of treatments for hearing disorders, including tinnitus

Any research that underpins the development of treatments, including but not limited to medical devices, pharmacological treatments, genetic or cellular therapies, will be considered under this category.

Treatments should aim to prevent hearing loss, restore auditory function or silence tinnitus.

Examples of research topics included in this category:

- identifying the causes of hearing loss, including central auditory processing disorders
- improving understanding of the molecular and/or cellular changes associated with different types of hearing disorders
- improving the interface between a cochlear implant and the auditory nerve
- catalysing the development of novel medical devices to aid or restore auditory function
- contributing towards the development of therapies to prevent loss of auditory function
- identifying biological pathways that could be targeted to trigger the regeneration of damaged cell types in the auditory system
- advancing drug or gene-based approaches to restore hearing function or trigger cell regeneration
- advancing cell-based therapies to repair damage to the auditory system
- identifying the causes of tinnitus
- improving understanding of the biological basis of tinnitus
- contributing towards the development of treatments to silence or alleviate tinnitus
- improving understanding of ear anatomy and how defects at the cell, tissue and organ level impact hearing

2) Research to improve how new treatments for hearing loss and tinnitus are developed and tested

Any research that improves how new treatments are developed or tested is encouraged under this category.

Improving measurement of auditory function or tinnitus

Research to improve how hearing or tinnitus is measured or monitored:

- to improve diagnosis or prognosis
- to identify the type and location of damage underlying a person's hearing difficulty or tinnitus
- to provide new and robust measures for use as clinical trial endpoints to evaluate interventions
- to allow for patient stratification into clinical trials
- to help select the most appropriate treatment

Such measures include, but are not limited to, genetic, anatomical, physiological, or behavioural approaches.

Developing models of human hearing disorders, including tinnitus

Research to develop models of human hearing disorders, including tinnitus, to allow for robust pre-clinical validation of treatments:

- *in vivo* animal models
- *in vitro* animal or human cellular models
- computer models of human hearing loss or tinnitus

All anatomical science projects will be considered for joint funding with the Anatomical Society.

Application procedure

- Complete the PhD application form (available on the RNID website), following all instructions in the form and the accompanying guidance carefully.
- Email the completed form as an attached MS Word document (not exceeding 5Mb and with a filename in the format of SurnameApplicant1_PhD23.docx e.g., Robinson_PhD23.docx) to: PhD@rnid.org.uk
- All applications must be received on or before: **Thursday 8 September 2022** (5pm).
- For further details:

Tel/Textphone: E-mail: Web: +44(0) 20 3227 6159 PhD@rnid.org.uk www.rnid.org.uk/phd

Additional notes for applicants

- Applications must be submitted by the potential supervisor. It is not essential to include a named student at the time of application. However, the PhD Student CV Form must be completed and submitted once a suitable student has been recruited. The award will only be made if RNID is satisfied that a suitable student has been recruited.
- We encourage applications for co-funded PhD studentships. The application must describe the source (or expected source) of the remaining funding. This may be from the host institute or an external partner (i.e. another funding body, charity or company).
- Applications must explain how the project is focussed on outcomes that will contribute to benefitting people with hearing loss or tinnitus.
- See the '*PhD application form guidance 2023'* for further information and help with completing the application form.
- A summary of our current terms and conditions is included on our website for your reference please note that these are subject to change.

Timeline

Application deadline: Thursday 8 September 2022 (5pm) Final decision: January 2023

About the award

Aim

It is hoped that students will continue to make a valuable contribution towards improving the lives of people with hearing loss or tinnitus through research after completing their PhD.

Assessment

- Each application will be peer reviewed by at least two experts in the field.
- These reviews and the original proposals are then considered by our Future Leaders Review Panel* with input from the Anatomical Society where relevant. The panel members will discuss and rate each proposal against the aims of the PhD Studentship scheme.

- The top proposals will then be put forward to RNID (and the Anatomical Society, where relevant) for funding.
- Successful applicants will be notified of intention to offer funding in January 2023.

Eligibility

Supervisors and students must be based at recognised British or Irish universities or research institutes.

Grant

The Grant will be paid to the university, which will administer it in accordance with its usual procedures. The level of funding for PhD Studentships commencing in 2023 will be:

ltem		Year 1 (£)	Year 2 (£)	Year 3 (£)
Student stipend	London	18,062	18,737	19,412
	Outside London	16,062	16,737	17,412
University / College fees, conference & training allowance, consumables		9,896	9,896	9,896
Total	London	27,958	28,633	29,308
	Outside London	25,958	26,633	27,308

Duration

Continuation of funding each year will be conditional on evidence of satisfactory progress (see progress monitoring, below). Funding will be for the agreed duration only.

Reporting

Supervisors will submit a short interim report detailing progress to date and future plans annually. A final report, giving a summary of the overall findings and future plans of the student, will be submitted following completion of the project. Students will be obliged to attend up to one or two events organised by RNID. Suitable notice will be given.

Students funded jointly by RNID and the Anatomical Society will have yearly virtual visits from two members of the Anatomical Society Council to discuss progress. They will be expected to become members of the Anatomical Society and to attend Society meetings. Funds for attending one Society meeting a year will be provided on application.

Progress monitoring

If the university's system for monitoring student and project progress differs from the standard requirements detailed below, RNID staff and the individual supervisor should discuss how to proceed in each case.

Student monitoring standard requirements

A full first year report will be the basis of an oral examination at the host university by two appropriate members of staff (at Lecturer level or more senior) nominated by the supervisor. The examiners will subsequently recommend that the student either completes the PhD training or conducts no further research and submits the project as an MSc (if allowable by the university). Copies of the examiners' reports including their final recommendation, plus any comments from the supervisor, should be submitted to RNID within one month of completion of this confirmation review.

Supervision and mentoring

The supervisor will actively manage and supervise the student and research project.

The student should be allocated a mentor to act as an additional source of objective advice for the student. The mentor should be based at a different department or work in a different discipline to the student but have experience of supervising graduate students. The student should have regular access to the mentor (at least 4 times per year).

*RNID Future Leaders review panel

- Professor Brian Moore, University of Cambridge (chair)
- Professor Jennifer Linden, University College London
- Dr Christian Füllgrabe, University of Nottingham
- Professor Andrea Streit, King's College London
- Dr William Sedley, Newcastle University
- Dr Mark Wallace, University of Nottingham
- Dr Dan Jagger, University College London
- Professor Walter Marcotti, University of Sheffield
- Professor Chris Plack, University of Manchester
- Dr Deborah Vickers, University of Cambridge
- Dr Morag Lewis, King's College London
- Panel members from the Anatomical Society to be confirmed

Diagram of application process

