

BSG Research Scholars Programme

Background

Supporting gastrointestinal and liver research is one of the key charitable objectives of the British Society of Gastroenterology (BSG). It is well recognised that research active institutions deliver higher quality and safer care. Hence it is the goal of the BSG to support integration of research into clinical care. It is recognised that a significant proportion of research support from BSG members comes through voluntary activity outside of their job plans. It is also recognised that main research activity and interested BSG members including early career researchers, allied health care professionals, and clinicians from non-academic centres may not have access to develop their research ideas and potential to substantial grants. The BSG is committed to actively and openly supporting and promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) at all levels. The 2021-2024 BSG Research Strategy aims to support the untapped potential for research participation among members by offering the infrastructure and initial support to those who wish to progress their research ideas while practicing as front-line health care professionals delivering care. The initiation of the BSG Research Scholars Programme is one of the key components of this strategy.

Aims

- To provide BSG members who wish to be involved in research an effective protected space and remunerated time for developing their own studies
- To ensure levelling up of research opportunities to include healthcare professionals outside of academic institutions
- To support junior investigators working towards independent careers in clinical research in gastroenterology or hepatology
- To support the scholars in securing external seed funding in their specialty areas
- To provide funding for time but do not, however, cover additional costs arising from this such as conference attendance, publishing costs etc.
- To support BSG members to deliver on research priorities of the Society (see below for themes)
- To promote multi-professional and collaborative network research between gastroenterologists, specialist Nurses, and Allied Health Care professionals
- To increase participation in gastroenterology and hepatology clinical studies within and outside of NIHR portfolio
- To develop members into clinical academics and clinical researchers by following pilot work grant income via successful grants
- To develop research active clinicians who will integrate research into clinical practice

Eligibility

- BSG membership mandatory at application
- Substantive Consultants without protected time for research in job plan
- Gastroenterology, Hepatology, Nutrition or Endoscopy or other Specialist nurses
- Other Allied Health Care professionals including dietitians, GI physiologists, GI psychologists

BSG Research Scholars Programme

- Trainees in programme at the time of application
- The following are not eligible to apply
 - Healthcare professionals currently holding a part time or full-time academic contract
 - Healthcare professionals currently holding active research grants which pays for the time such as NIHR grants

Scholarship details

The scholarship will be awarded through open competition on application through the BSG Research Committee. There will be 5 awards in total with the funding based on current salary scale of the applicant with maximum funding available per year of 10K. The award will be for a maximum duration of 2 years, subject to satisfactory yearly appraisals. The scholarship may be extended to a term of maximum of three years for exceptional applicants by the progress review panel, who have demonstrated impact during the original two-year term.

These successful applicants will spend 1-2 days per week (equivalent to one session or programmed activities (PAs) a week) participating in research activities working in a unit with time, skills and track record to support career development. Where appropriate, an individualised bespoke programme will be developed, based within departments at research active units to support study development. Where relevant, the applicant will be expected to be attached to one of the established research mentors including methodologists, systematic reviewers, grant writers, data managers, statisticians or epidemiologists as appropriate to develop their grant applications or publications. Scholars will also support receive 1:1 personal mentoring. They will also be expected to produce outputs of publications and/or successful onward grant applications, with the expectation that the latter will make the posts self-funding by the end of the scholarship period.

Selection Criteria

Essential

- BSG membership and practicing within United Kingdom
- Demonstrable prior participation in Gastroenterology or Hepatology research
- Research should be patient-oriented. For the purposes of these scholarships, patient-oriented research is defined as:
 - Research conducted with humans
 - Research on new diagnostic and therapeutic interventions
 - Research on material of human origin, such as tissues and specimens
 - While research that explores mechanisms of human disease is encouraged, the research projects should be translational in nature, i.e. have direct applicability to clinical care

Desirable

- Pilot data required with potential to generate substantial grant income
- Evidence of commitment to integrated clinical and research career

BSG Research Scholars Programme

- Demonstrable commitment and career progression in the chosen specialty
- Presentation of prior work at a national or international meeting
- Publications in peer reviewed journals
- Demonstration of the potential to develop collaborations
- Association of the project to existing collaborative networks such as trainee networks
- Research proposals meeting research priorities
- Co-funding available for the project
- At application, to hold or have submitted for a Higher Degree (PhD/MD/DPhil) in a relevant subject area, or additional qualifications e.g. MSc, MRes or other post-graduate training

Host NHS organisation

Written confirmation is required from the employing organisation to release them from health and care services for the duration of the Scholars programme with protected time in job plan for research which is not utilised for clinical or activity outside the remit of the research proposal. Additionally, the application should be reviewed and approved by the manager with responsibility for research (e.g. Head of Research, Research Director or manager or equivalent) within the employing organisation. Only one award will be given to individual organisations. If, however, large numbers of applications are submitted from a single organisation, there may be a need to internally prioritise those applications, and if this is necessary the review panel will contact the relevant organisation. The Department Director or Service Lead will be expected to support the application and identify how the service gap will be filled for the time allocated to research. They will need to confirm that backfill will be available to cover the sessions or PAs and that, where necessary, the successful candidate will be able to resume their clinical duties at the end of the scholarship programme. Where appropriate, co-funding with other funders including industry will be considered.

Other collaborations

We will expect the applicants to outline which other collaborators will be involved to help develop the proposal and how this will call upon their expertise. This will include collaborations with CRGs, NIHR, CTU, RDU, and charities.

Progress Assessment

Progress will be monitored via the BSG Research Committee Scholars Monitoring Group through six monthly interim meetings and annual appraisals to determine progress. Applicants will need to be able to demonstrate significant research impact through a range of metrics including progress in research recruitment and delivery:

- Completion of the project as per application until report within the agreed time frame
- Onward grant applications and awards
- Research abstracts and publications
- Development of collaborative multidisciplinary networks
- Leadership in studies as CI or PI

BSG Research Scholars Programme

- Demonstration of research impact – recruitment numbers
- Projection to self-funding at the end of maximum 3 years

The applicants are strongly encouraged to submit the research outputs to BSG annual meetings and if an abstract related to your research project is selected for presentation, you may submit up to £500 in expenses (travel/accommodation) for reimbursement. The final report of research should be submitted no later than 2 months after the completion of a 2-year period.

Scholarship Judging

The judging committee will be chaired by the Chair of the BSG Research Committee and will have a lay trustee as a non-voting member. In addition, 4 other voting judges will be included in the judging panel meeting the EDI principles of the BSG.

Reviewers consider the following when scoring applications: prior record, potential or developing as clinical researcher, feasibility, scientific and clinical significance of the research proposal, as well as methods. In evaluating the merits of an application, the Committee will consider the following:

- The personal attributes and potential of the applicants
- Proposed collaboration (multicentre and/or multi-speciality professionals)
- Scientific and clinical significance of the project
- Feasibility (including availability of adequate resources, personnel, and facilities)
- Design & methods
- Availability of preliminary data

Research Priority Themes for 2023-2025 awards

1. Pilot research into unmet needs identified in Priority Setting Partnership
2. Research addressing inequality in GI healthcare
3. Sustainability in Gastroenterology and Hepatology
4. Application of novel technologies to improve patient care