

The Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Awards

Guidance for Applicants

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1.0 Introduction

Ann Masson acquired a spinal cord injury at the age of 14 and was provided with treatment and rehabilitation at the National Spinal Injuries Centre (NSIC), Stoke Mandeville Hospital for a period of two years. Under the encouragement of Sir Ludwig Guttmann, Masson represented Great Britain at the 1960 and 1964 Paralympics and in 1962 at the Commonwealth Games. In 1960 in Rome Masson won a gold medal for swimming and in 1962 won a gold and two silver medals in Perth.

Ann Masson died in January 2011. Subsequent to her death, a legacy fund was donated to the Stoke Mandeville Hospital aiming to support research into spinal cord injuries. The research Board of the National Spinal Injuries Centre at Stoke Mandeville Hospital successfully bid for £240,000 to establish the one-off “Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Awards”.

This one-off fund is intended to provide funding for two to four spin-off research projects to test feasibility and/or obtain results that will enhance the chances of success in obtaining a substantive grant. Project proposals should be guided by the national agenda for research into spinal cord injury and clearly indicate the short- and long-term benefits which can be gained by individuals with spinal cord injury and their caregivers.

2.0 Award details

2.1 Aims of the Awards

This funding scheme has three main aims:

- i. To support research into spinal cord injury benefiting individuals living with spinal cord injury and their caregivers.
- ii. To support research aiming to test feasibility and/or obtain results that will enhance the chances of success in obtaining a substantive grant.
- iii. To support the joint partnership of researchers, healthcare professionals, patients and their caregivers in preparing and conducting research into spinal cord injury.

2.2 Eligibility

- i. Awards will only be granted to universities, hospitals or recognised academic research institutes in the United Kingdom.
- ii. Individuals who are employed by, or whose salary derives from, a commercial organisation are not eligible to apply for this award.
- iii. The applicant needs to be contracted to an organisation as outlined under item 2.2.i.

- iv. Co-applicants working at overseas institutions are accepted.

Applications demonstrating the following attributes are particularly encouraged:

- v. The topic of research is guided by the national agenda for research into spinal cord injury and we welcome applications in all areas. However, following the outcomes of the ‘Spinal Cord Injury Priority Setting Partnership’, applications covering the following topics are particularly encouraged:
 - a. Activity based rehabilitation
 - b. Management of bladder and bowel function and related complications
 - c. Health and wellbeing following discharge from the hospital to the community
- vi. A spin-off research project aiming to test feasibility and/or obtain results that will enhance the chances of success in obtaining a substantive grant.
- vii. A research project aiming to achieve short- and/or long-term benefits to individuals with spinal cord injury and their caregivers.
- viii. A research project advocating a multi-centre and multidisciplinary approach to address proposed topic of research.

2.3 Available funding

Applicants can apply for up to £120,000 of funding. This is the maximum amount to be awarded and includes any VAT. Up to £240,000 has been made available to support two to four spin-off research projects. The projects funded through the Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Awards are expected to be completed within one to three calendar years. The funding is not intended to part-fund research projects.

2.4 Critical dates

The following dates have been set as deadlines for submissions, review outcomes and funding announcement. Please note that late applications, or changes to applications after passing of the deadline will *not* be accepted.

Action	Date
Open for ‘outline application’ submissions	1 Aug 2014
Close of submissions of ‘outline applications’	30 Oct 2014, 17:00 GMT
Completion of Peer Review & Triage	27 Nov 2014

Action	Date
Open for 'full application' submissions	1 Dec 2014
Close of submissions of 'full applications'	29 Jan 2015, 17:00 GMT
Completion of Peer Review & Outcome	26 Mar 2015
Funding Announcement	Apr/May 2015

3.0 Application procedures

The Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Awards will be granted following a two-stage review process. First, a call for 'outline applications' will be advertised after which a triage will take place and a shortlist will be compiled. Second, those applicants whose 'outline application' have been shortlisted will be invited to submit a 'full application'.

3.1 Outline application

An 'outline application' must be submitted on the designated application form available from the Stoke Mandeville Spinal Foundation website (www.smsf.org.uk). The application form is provided as a form template in Word and should be submitted as a Word document. Text box sizes are approximate; re-formatting after text entry may be required. The form must be completed in 12pt Cambria typescript with 1.15 pt line spacing. Incorrectly formatted or applications submitted on previous versions of the form will not be accepted. An electronic version of the completed form must be sent to application.smmra@smsf.org.uk. The original signed application form and *five* double-sided photocopies, to the Stoke Mandeville Spinal Foundation office; contact details are provided on the first page of this document. Each of the five photocopies must be stapled together; use of paper clips should be avoided.

3.3 Full application

Those applicants whose 'outline application' have been shortlisted will be invited to submit a 'full application'. The application form will be provided as a form template in Word and should be submitted as a Word document. Text box sizes are approximate; re-formatting after text entry may be required. The form must be completed in 12pt Cambria typescript with 1.15 pt line spacing. Incorrectly formatted or applications submitted on previous versions of the form will not be accepted. An electronic version of the completed form must be sent to application.smmra@smsf.org.uk. The original signed application form and *five* double-sided photocopies, to the Stoke Mandeville Spinal Foundation office; contact details are provided on the first page of this document. Each of the five photocopies must be stapled together; use of paper clips should be avoided.

3.4 Review Process

Peer review provides expert scrutiny of research proposals, helps to maintain high quality standards and encourages submission of accurate, thorough and credible applications.

3.4.1 Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Awards Committee

The Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Awards committee consists of eight members: three NSIC Research Board members (consisting of the Chair, the Research Director of the Stoke Mandeville Spinal Foundation and the research and development officer of the Buckshealthcare Healthcare NHS Trust), a charitable funds committee member of the Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, the Clinical Director of the NSIC, an external senior clinical research advisor and two patient and public representatives. The Awards Committee will nominate members of the Advisory Panel, oversee the Award application process, and monitor the progress of awarded research projects. The names of the Awards committee members will be announced and presented on the project website (i.e. www.smsf.org.uk/smmra).

3.4.2 Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Advisory Panel

Peer review is undertaken by the Advisory Panel which consists of committed clinicians, researchers and other experts on a voluntary basis. The Awards Committee members identify potential Advisory Panel members, nationally and internationally, on the basis of their experience and appropriate range of competencies in spinal cord injury research. The names of the Advisory Panel members will be announced and presented on the project website (i.e. www.smsf.org.uk/smmra).

The primary duties and responsibilities of Advisory Panel members are to:

- i. Identify and advise the Awards Committee of all real or potential conflicts of interest they have with applications, see item [3.4.3](#);
- ii. Provide independent, expert assessment of the application based on the standardised assessment criteria;
- iii. Provide a written report on the strengths and weaknesses of the application including appropriate queries of applicants against the assessment criteria;
- iv. Provide a score against the six award assessment criteria, see item [3.4.4](#); and
- v. Ensure that their assessments are accurate and honest, and all claims are capable of being verified.

3.4.3 Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest exists where there is a divergence between the individual interests of an Awards Committee or Advisory Panel member and their professional responsibilities such that an independent observer might reasonably conclude that the professional actions of that person are unduly influenced by their own interests.

All Awards Committee and Advisory Panel members reviewing applications must declare their conflicts of interest prior to assessing confidential information. No reviewer will be assigned an application on which they have a conflict of interest. Awards Committee and Advisory Panel members will not participate in a discussion in which there is a real or perceived conflict of interest and are required to excuse themselves from that aspect of a meeting and any relevant application review(s).

3.4.4 Triage & Review criteria

Outline applications will be evaluated by the Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Awards committee against the following six specific criteria:

- i. **Relevance.** Is the proposed research relevant to the remit of this award? Have patients and their caregivers been involved in deciding on the topic of proposed research? Will the hypothesised outcomes contribute significantly to our understanding of spinal cord injury?
- ii. **Impact.** Will the results lead to clinical, psychological and/or social benefits of individuals living with spinal cord injury and their caregivers?
- iii. **Originality.** Is the proposed research addressing new approaches to important questions that we currently do not have answers to? Did the applicants express the lack of understanding and/or the need for high-quality research in proposed area of research?
- iv. **Methodology.** Is the proposed research project described in the application designed appropriately to answer the questions being addressed?
- v. **Feasibility.** Is the proposed research project achievable with the resources requested in the application? Are the applicants realistically capable of completing the research project within the proposed time scale?
- vi. **Applicant.** Does the track record, skills and expertise of the applicant(s) give confidence that the proposed research project will be carried out successfully?

Full applications will be evaluated and ranked by both the Awards committee and members of the Advisory Panel against the same six criteria.

3.5 Awards & Contracts

The outcomes of all applications will be notified by email as soon as is practically possible. Successful applicants will be notified followed by the official Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Award contract, containing a copy of the full application and 'terms and references'. It will be deemed that the terms of the award have been accepted on signature of the award agreement.

4.0 Guidance for completion of the application form

The 'outline application' and 'full application' forms have been designed in such a way that questions and items are mostly self-explanatory. Guiding comments have been added to some questions and items on the application form. Should applicants have any queries regarding any question or item on the application form, further information and assistance can be sought by emailing info.smmra@smsf.org.uk. The response time for application specific queries is five working days. Applicants MUST certify that this application adheres to the Charity Commission Regulations and Guidance for the Use of Charitable Funds disclosed in *Appendix 1*.

5.0 Financial issues

The exact method of reimbursement will depend on the type of resources requested. Details will be finalised on approval of the grant. Solely incurred eligible expenditure related directly to this application will be reimbursed on a quarterly basis. A condition of the scheme is that the research should usually start within 6 months of notification of the award. Written authorisation to extend the start date beyond 6 months should be obtained from the Awards committee if this condition cannot be fulfilled.

5.1 Unspent funds

All funds which are unexpended or uncommitted at the end of the grant period cannot be claimed.

6.0 Successful applicants

6.1 Award agreement & Certification

Personally signed statements, including the department head, and institutional approval certification will be required from those projects selected for funding.

6.2 Requirements

The projects funded through the Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Awards are expected to be completed within one to three calendar years.

Progress of studies will be monitored on a six monthly basis by submission of a progress report to the Awards Committee. The Awards Committee shall use these progress reports to assess the awarded recipients' progress towards achieving the objectives as set out in the 'full application'. The Awards Committee must deem each progress report satisfactory before subsequent payments can be released.

Within three months of the expiry of the granting period, a final 'research project report' must be forwarded to the Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Awards Committee which includes:

- i. Scientific report.
- ii. Financial statement.
- iii. A 'lay summary' report not exceeding one page, expressed in terms suitable for public release and
- iv. Additional detailed materials suitable for review by professionals in related areas.

The timely submission of these reports will be a condition of any award granted. Up to 25% of the funding may be withheld until the progress report or final 'research project report' is received.

All presentations and publications made possible by awarded funds must acknowledge the Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Award. For acknowledging funding statements such as: *"This publication [or presentation] was supported by funds received from the Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Awards"* should be included.

6.3 Change to Grant or Award terms and conditions

Should the awarded recipient wish to make any changes to what was stipulated in the 'full application' or agreed under the 'terms and references', written consent must be sought and obtained from the Awards committee. Such changes include (but are not limited to) the replacement of personnel funded under the award agreement, changes of investigative sites or departments, requests for deferral of start date, suspensions during or extensions to the end of the Grant, or substantial changes to the aims or methodology of the project set out in the 'full application'.

Once the request for changes to the agreed 'terms and references' has been approved by the Awards committee, a novation agreement is required to be entered and signed by the awarded recipient, the Finance and R&D officers of the hosting institution and the Awards committee.

Due to the strictly limited funds available, upward revisions to the awarded funds will not be considered. The Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Awards committee should be notified of any substantial delays experienced in the preparations, conduct and reporting of awarded research project. The Awards Committee shall use these progress reports to assess the awarded recipients' progress towards achieving the objectives as set out in the 'full application'.

Appendix 1

Regulations for The Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Awards Scheme and the Use of Charitable Funds,

- A1.1 The Charity Commission NHS Charities Guidance states that the principle established in Research by Higher Institutions should be applied by NHS Trustees when considering whether to fund research or to accept funding in order to conduct research.
- A1.2 Medical Research to be financed from Charitable Funds has to be first approved by the Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Awards Committee.
- A1.3 Charitable Funds must solely finance Medical Research when there is the intention that the results will be published and have Public Benefit. There may be occasions where publishing the results of Medical Research is inadvisable due to the unsuccessful result from it. However the Stoke Mandeville-Masson Research Awards Committee will scrutinise this decision as well as examine the progress of all research projects and the planned programme of payments.
- A1.4 It is absolutely essential to understand that there is nothing charitable, and no fundamental public benefit, in conducting research or in paying someone else to conduct it. The duty of the Trustees is to certify that the useful results of the research that are financed by the Charitable Funds are dedicated to the fulfilment of their charity's purposes and, consequently, to the realisation of a public benefit.
- A1.5 Charitable Funds must not be used in order to support private commercial research. Charitable Funds must be for the public benefit and not for the benefit of a private individual or organisation. Such research projects have to be financed by Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust Revenue budget.
- A1.6 The Awards committee members have the basic duties to ensure that any resource that is going to be spent in Medical Research comply with the awards' purposes, it is managed effectively and cost effective, it is good quality and have the public benefit. These duties are onerous and must not be undertaken lightly.
- A1.7 When a drug company contracts with a researcher to undertake a clinical trial on its behalf, the contract, which is made between the researcher and the drug company, invariably makes it clear that the results are owned by the drug company. Therefore, even if in due course the results are made available to the public, it is the drug company that receives the results first in order to see if they are capable of being exploited commercially. This is therefore a business service undertaken by the researcher or by the NHS trust (depending on who signed the contract) and not a charitable activity.