



MND ASSOCIATION
Doctoral Training Award in Data Science 2026
Guidelines for submission of Expression of Interest

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MND Association, Francis Crick House, 6 Summerhouse Road, Moulton Park, Northampton NN3 6BJ
Website: www.mndassociation.org
Registered Charity No. 294354

MND ASSOCIATION

Doctoral Training Award in Data Science 2026

INTRODUCTION

The MND Association supports biomedical research on Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and related conditions, in all relevant disciplines. The objectives of the MND Association research funding programme are to support research aimed at understanding the causes of MND, improving diagnosis, elucidating disease mechanisms and facilitating the translation of therapeutic strategies from the laboratory to the clinic.

For more information, please see the Association's [Research Strategy](#).

For many years the MND Association has annually awarded several studentship grants, each supporting a single student.

In parallel with our standard studentship applications round, in 2026 we are seeking applications for the first MND Association Doctoral Training Award, focusing on data science.

This award will provide a maximum of £700,000 - £800,000 over a 5-year period to support a single cohort of non-clinical PhD students, providing flexible funding to support retention of high-quality graduates in MND research.

This is a pilot of a new approach to funding doctoral training. We hope this will:

- Help develop a skilled workforce to address the major challenges in MND research
- Advance current understanding and generate new knowledge
- Retain high-quality doctoral graduates in MND research

Applications may be submitted by a single institute or by collaborating institutes, with all students to be based in the UK or Ireland. There may be collaboration with established researchers elsewhere.

The studentships should start in October 2027.

PROCEDURE

The applications procedure for this award will vary slightly from that normally used for our grant applications.

We are inviting applicants to discuss their ideas with staff at the MND Association, followed by submission of a formal 'Expression of Interest' (EOI).

The deadline for submission of the EOI is **Thursday 14 May 2026**.

If a full application is invited, the deadline for submission will be due mid-July. Full applications will be independently peer reviewed prior to consideration by the Association's Biomedical Research Advisory Panel (BRAP) in October. The Panel's funding recommendations will be considered by the Board of Trustees of the MND Association.

For further information on the Association's standard application review process, please see the MND Association [Biomedical Research Governance Overview](#), noting the above-mentioned variation to the summary application stage.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The purpose of the Doctoral Training Award

The proposed doctoral training for this cohort must directly align with the MND Association's [Research Strategy](#) and must focus exclusively on doctoral training for data science.

One award will be made in 2026. Funding should be sufficient to support three - four students. Leveraging of additional funding to increase the number of students supported is encouraged.

Applicants will be asked to outline a coherent training programme which will support students to undertake their individual research projects alongside innovative cohort-level training. All students should have access to wider training opportunities to support all aspects of their professional development.

We strongly encourage applications from multi-organisation consortia which build on existing partnerships or seek to build new partnerships. You may apply as a single research organisation where you can demonstrate sufficient capacity and infrastructure to deliver high quality training across your proposed programme.

Levels of Funding

Within the doctoral training award, the MND Association will fund the studentships at the same level as those awarded under our standard procedure for the same timeframe.

It is planned that funding will cover the following for each student:

- a student stipend as set by the MND Association, approximately in line with the stipends offered by UKRI-funded grants, expected to be as follows for grants starting in autumn 2027:

○ Year 1	£23,000 outside London	£25,000 in London
○ Year 2	£24,500 outside London	£26,500 in London
○ Year 3	£26,000 outside London	£28,000 in London
○ Year 4	£28,000 outside London	£30,000 in London
- £10,000 for research expenses in each year, including equipment, travel to visit collaborators etc (justification of how this will be used is required at full application)
- A budget of £2,000 over the grant for conference attendance
- Relevant tuition fees at the standard rate for UK students

Due to the differential stipend within/outside London, the maximum budget of the grant should be between £700,000 - £800,000, depending on the number of students to be based at a London institute.

Reporting is an important requirement of awarded grants

Studentship grants are normally expected to provide an annual report to describe the progress of the work and the personal development of the student.

Please consider this when planning your project.

Eligibility and Personal direction of the project

Applications are invited from prospective supervisors, based in institutions in the UK and Ireland. The principal applicants must have demonstrable experience of supervising PhD students, and they must have contracts of employment that extend beyond the lifetime of the award, which is expected to be 2027-2032.

It is expected that the grant holder/s will be actively engaged in coordinating the award and the overall direction of the research. Each student should have suitable supervision in place involving at least one of the principal applicants for each student.

Timing of applications and award start dates

The Expression of Interest (EOI) should be submitted by Thursday 14 May 2026. Any invitation to submit a full application will be confirmed in early June, with the full application due by mid-July.

The Biomedical Research Advisory Panel (BRAP) will meet to consider applications in October 2026, with studentships expected to start in the autumn of 2027.

Collaborators

Where the viability of a proposal depends on the collaboration / involvement with investigators **not named as applicants**, the exact role of the collaborator/s should be clearly stated. Confirmation from each collaborator indicating their willingness to participate should be provided when the EOI is submitted.

SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact the MND Association as soon as possible by email to research.grants@mndassociation.org. In this email you only need to provide very brief information, eg who will be involved as principal applicants. You will be contacted to arrange a meeting to discuss your ideas.

Please DO NOT complete the online summary application form, as you would for a standard studentship application. The application window for Expressions of Interest will open on 2 April 2026 and **close on Thursday 14 May 2026**. Applications will be considered by the MND Association's Biomedical Research Advisory Panel.

DATA PROTECTION

Information provided within the Expression of Interest will be entered into our grants management database and used solely for the purpose of the grants application and awarding processes (please see [Biomedical Research Governance Overview](#) section 3). When a grant has been awarded, contact details will also be added to the Association's contact database, for the purpose of providing you with MND Association information only eg deadline date for grants rounds, symposium details and any other relevant information. There will be the opportunity to opt out of receiving these non-grant communications.