Term and Conditions for the ABN Clinical Research Training Fellowship scheme

2024

These terms and conditions represent the core terms agreed by the ABN and its funding partners who will be specified in the promotional material for that year’s fellowship. The term ‘ABN’ should be assumed to include the funding partners related to a fellowship unless specifically stated otherwise in this document. Individual funding partners will note any exceptions or additions to these terms in a separate document.

About the fellowship scheme

The ABN scheme is essentially a 2-3 year salary-only award (with NI and pension overheads), which is designed to support a pre-consultant level neurologist to obtain a higher degree (PhD, MD) in research focused on neurological disorders with clear benefit to patients. There is a small amount of flexible funding (currently £10K p.a.) but wider research costs must be met through other sources (and which must be declared). Applicants will be clinically-qualified and hold an National Training Number (NTN) in Neurology or, if at an early post-graduate stage, be able to clearly demonstrate their commitment and trajectory to obtaining one. The primary supervisor, if a neurologist, must be a member of the ABN. If the proposed primary supervisor is not a neurologist, then arrangements for the supervision of clinical training during the research period must be specified in the training section of the application form.

The ABN is open to considering applications from those holding a Neurophysiology NTN. However applicants will be asked to request some financial contribution from the British Society of Clinical Neurophysiology, in discussion with the Chair of the Research Committee and eligibility cannot be assumed. Please contact info@abn.org.uk to discuss in advance.

Key elements of the scheme

1. The scheme offers between 2 and and 3 years of funding (time must be justified in relation to the higher degree timetable) covering salary and oncosts and up to £10K a year for consumables. Applications for less than 2 years of funding are not accepted:

   a) The Fellow’s salary is to be included at an appropriate point on the NHS or equivalent’s basic pay scale (see the BMA’s junior doctor pay scale). We will cross check salaries included in the application. We will also cover annual increments, the employer’s cost of UK or Irish National Insurance and superannuation contributions.

   b) Additional costs relating to PhD fees, conference, travel, equipment and consumables can be claimed for in the application up to £10,000 per annum.

2. Successful applicants in 2023 will be expected to commence their project by September 2024, with funding being paid to institutions in arrears from 2025.

Applicant criteria

3. Applicants will either already hold a UK NTN or Irish equivalent specialist training post in Neurology or Neurophysiology, or be able to demonstrate convincingly that they are planning to apply for one after completion of their higher degree.
4. The Fellowship is full-time and the Fellow may not be in receipt of salary funding from any other source at the same time as the ABN salary fellowship funding. Nor can they have a material interest (even if not salaried) in a company that might provide a conflict of interest and/or distract from delivering the project.

5. Those who have already secured a Medical Research Council, Wellcome, NIHR, or other personal fellowship award of more than one year duration in Neurology, are not eligible for an ABN Fellowship.

6. Candidates may not apply more than twice to the ABN scheme.

7. Prospective applicants already awarded a PhD in another field may contact the ABN to discuss their eligibility via info@abn.org.uk.

Application

8. Applications should be submitted electronically on the application form provided by the publicised deadline date.

9. Career breaks, part-time working and changes in discipline will be taken into account when assessing research experience to date and track record.

10. Involvement of commercial partners in proposals is discouraged and unlikely to be supported by co-funders, but the potential applicant may contact the ABN to discuss eligibility via: info@abn.org.uk well ahead of the deadline.

Interview

11. Selection of candidates for interview is based upon a ranked independent peer review scoring exercise organised by the ABN and according to the maximum number of potential awards available.

12. Accepting an interview for an ABN scheme award is with the clear expectation that a successful candidate will accept the award immediately. It is not possible for an applicant to await the outcome of a later application.

Higher education institution

13. The fellowship application must be supported by a UK or Irish Higher Education Institution or within the NHS/HSE.

14. The Supervisor of the Fellowship holder will hold a senior post in a UK or Irish Higher Education Institution or within the NHS/HSE and be an ABN member.

15. On being offered an award, the institution will need to send a confirmation via email of a pre-doctoral candidate’s successful registration for a higher degree as a requirement for release of funds.

16. Host institutions will be expected to complete the relevant undertakings associated with higher degree students, including ensuring the timely return of candidate and supervisor annual progress reports.

17. The ABN does not act as an employer and therefore, in all cases where support is provided for the employment of staff, the host institution undertakes to issue a
contract of employment in accordance with the provisions of the Employment Rights Act 1996, and any other relevant Act relating to the conditions of employment. The ABN will not be responsible for claims under any statute or at common law, nor will it indemnify the host Institution against any claim for compensation or against any other claims for which the host Institution may be liable as an employer. The ABN will not cover maternity or paternity leave which will be the responsibility of the employer.

18. It is anticipated that the Institution will pay the Fellow's salary on a monthly basis.

19. The ABN will not meet the invoice from the Institution in connection with the Fellowship costs for the final 6 months of the Fellowship until it has received the Fellow's final report.

20. The ABN will under no circumstances agree to meet any indirect costs or other administrative overheads imposed by a University or other Institution and these must not feature in the application.

21. The Institution will arrange for its Finance Department to submit to the ABN in January each year suitable invoices on the Institution's printed paper, detailing all costs incurred during the year within the limits agreed in this Offer of Award. No other method of payment will be permitted. The ABN will not reimburse any expenditure which is not claimed within 12 months of being incurred.

22. Any apparatus provided by this funding is to be used in the Institutional department hosting the awardee, primarily for the research outlined in the application. It may only be used for other research provided this in no way interferes with or delays the funded research. At the conclusion of the Fellowship or following withdrawal of financial support, the equipment shall remain in the department (which shall be responsible for its maintenance, repair and insurance) and may be used by its members or those of other departments involved in research into neurological diseases.

23. The administering Institution will be responsible for all installation, maintenance, repairs and insurance costs. The Institution will order equipment in accordance with current legislation in respect of VAT or analogous taxation. Where exemption from such taxation is available, the Institution will be expected to take advantage thereof. Claims for the payment of an award for equipment should be made in the form of an invoice with copy invoices of the equipment purchased attached.

Obligations on the fellow once fellowship is confirmed

24. To be fair to all candidates, the awardee will be expected to accept and move forward with the fellowship immediately, withdrawing from any other funding process/scheme.

25. The awardee would, as soon as possible after appointment, advise the ABN of the starting date of the Fellowship. The ABN reserves the right to withdraw the offer if the Fellowship has not commenced within 12 months of the offer by the ABN.

26. The Fellow will use their best endeavours to complete the project within the agreed period and the overall grant awarded, and will make no material change to the description of the project without prior approval of the ABN.
27. The Fellow and their supervisor will supply the ABN with an annual report on the progress of the research, and specifically on the progress to successful thesis submission. The Fellow will provide a final report including a lay summary within three months of the termination date of the project. The final payments due under this Agreement will be withheld pending the receipt of a final report satisfactory to the ABN.

28. The Fellow will assist the ABN in its policy of publicising as widely as possible its grants and progress in scientific research supported by the ABN.

29. The Fellow will be invited to present a poster related to their research at the annual meeting, which it is expected they will attend and support ABN fellowship fundraising events.

30. In any peer reviewed publication resulting from work funded by the ABN, the support of the ABN and any co-funders of the award must be acknowledged, in a written form acceptable to all parties.

31. Where a patent is being sought in relation to work funded by the ABN scheme this should be discussed in advance of submission.

32. Any post-award arrangements proposed with commercial enterprise or commercial exploitation of any knowledge gained as a result of the research must be discussed with the ABN first.

33. No increase in the total of the proposed budget will be permitted once the Fellowship has been offered and accepted.

34. The ABN reserves the right to terminate the award for good reason e.g. failure to provide satisfactory evidence of project advancement, with due notice, at any time.

35. The ABN reserves the right to reclaim any unspent funds.

36. The formal award of a higher degree in relation to the project, or the commencement of an alternative salaried position will terminate the ABN award regardless of any unused funds.

37. Should the work terminate before the end of the Fellowship, or the Supervisor ceases to be actively concerned with the Fellowship, the ABN must be notified without delay.

38. The Applicant, Supervisor and Head of Department of the Host Institution must sign and return the appropriate undertakings when submitting the application.

39. The ABN will consider applications before the consent of the relevant ethics committee is obtained. Timescales for obtaining all necessary ethical and legal consents must then be specified in the project details. These approvals must be in place by the end of the first year, or the ABN reserves the right to withdraw funding.