



SMALL GRANTS SCHEME

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS 2025-26

Introduction

1. To further the objects of its Foundation, the College of Optometrists encourages and supports appropriate research into optometry and related subjects through a number of Scholarships, Bursaries, Awards to recognise research excellence and grants towards practice-based research.
2. This guide sets out the final of these, Small Grants for practice-based research, offered by the College in 2025-26.

Purpose and scope

3. The Small Grants Scheme provides funding to enable College Members to develop research expertise by undertaking small-scale, practice-based research projects, with help and support on all aspects of planning, undertaking and reporting on a research project available from the College Research Team and our Research Advisers. The Grants are intended to support research that takes place in practice settings, rather than laboratory settings. As a guide, previous funded projects have included:
 - the clinical value in obtaining a macular and optic nerve head scan in patients with a family history of glaucoma;
 - a qualitative evaluation of the implementation of optometry extended roles in glaucoma care;
 - clinical validation of a new picture-based visual acuity test in children with amblyopia;
 - patients' beliefs about, and perceptions of, adaptation to spectacles;
 - the visual requirements of British Sign Language (BSL) and the subsequent impact of visual impairment.
4. Applications have a closing date of 5pm on Friday 29 May 2026, after which all applications will be reviewed. Final awarding decisions are made by the end of September 2026.
5. In keeping with the Scheme's desire to support members with any level of research experience to apply, the College Research Team is available to support applicants to develop their applications. All applicants are very much encouraged to contact the College prior to application to discuss initial proposals, as many issues that may result in an unsuccessful application can be solved at the planning stage.

Eligibility

6. The Lead Recipient must be a Member of the College at the start of the research project and remain in membership for the duration of the Grant.
7. Each applicant may only submit one application per awarding round.

8. Previous Small Grant Scheme holders may apply for another Small Grant, but in such cases it should be made clear in the application both what skills or experience were gained from the previous Small Grant, as well as what new and additional skills or experience would be gained from a second Small Grant.
9. A Small Grant may be used to fund work that will form part of a larger qualification, but should not represent the entire work of an MSc or similar qualification, as this would be deemed too big a project for a Small Grant. If part of a qualification then it should be made clear how the specific project proposed fits into the larger qualification and how a Small Grant would not be effectively acting as top up funding for the larger qualification.
10. Grant funding should not be used to fund the time of any additional staff who may contribute to the project, or to attend international conferences.

Period of support

11. Small Grant Scheme projects should last no longer than one year (with a further three months to complete the Final Report). An application should make an explicit case for why their project will last longer than this if that is proposed.
12. The Lead Recipient and the College will agree a start date and completion date for the project. The College should be informed immediately if the Lead Recipient is unable to take up the Grant or unable to continue with the Grant (e.g. due to illness or other circumstances). Decisions about the transfer of the Grant will rest with the College.
13. The Lead Recipient will be required to submit a Progress Report partway through the project as well as a Final Report of their research within three months of completion of the project. The Final Report must be of an acceptable standard to the College and be accompanied by a financial statement relating actual expenditure to the original budget. The Final Report is the property of the College and may be published. Failure to submit a Final Report as outlined above may result in the College withholding final payment.
14. The Lead Recipient **must** update the College Research Team of changes (to personnel, circumstances or primary aim of the project) that may affect the timetable of report submission, or the outcome of the work. The College may request a review meeting with the Lead Recipient before submission of a report.
15. The College reserves the right to terminate a Grant if a recipient is in breach of any of the conditions of the Grant or becomes unfit or unable to pursue the work funded by the Grant.
16. If it is discovered that the research project will require more than 12 months for completion, or will not be completed by the scheduled date, the Lead Recipient **must** contact the College immediately for permission, and an Interim Report must be submitted detailing work done to date and estimated finish date. An interim financial statement must also be included.
17. The College's Research Advisers, as well as the College Research Team, are available to provide research advice and support on request.

Financial provision

18. Grants are for funding up to £5,000, and will be paid in three instalments:

- 40% at the start of the project on receipt of the Acceptance Form and evidence of ethical approval of the study (if required);
- 30% halfway through the project on receipt of a satisfactory Progress Report;
- 30% at the end of the project on receipt of the Final Report and financial statement.

19. Matched or dual funding is permitted, but such situations must be explained within an application, along with whether additional funding has already been secured (and any conditions on the project or its outputs as a result of that funding) and the consequences for the project if additional funding is sought but not secured.

Dissemination

20. The Lead Recipient will be encouraged to disseminate the results of the project using appropriate channels, e.g. peer reviewed academic journals, CPD journals or conference abstracts, but this is not mandatory. The College Research Team will provide support for this if successful applicants are interested. An electronic copy of all such publications should be sent to the College once accepted.

21. The College's support for the project must be acknowledged in any publication (written or electronic), poster or presentation and in any newspaper article or radio or television programme about the project and/or its outcomes. The College's support should be acknowledged with the following wording: 'Supported by a College of Optometrists Small Grant Award'.

22. The College may include information about projects in publicity and reporting literature. Any reported information about project results will be agreed with the Lead Recipient.

23. If Grant Recipients or their employers wish to issue press statements that mention the College of Optometrists, the College should be given an opportunity to comment on the draft. The text must acknowledge that the work has been funded by the College of Optometrists, but that the views expressed are those of the Grant Recipient(s) and not those of the College.

Further information

24. For assistance with any of the above, or developing an application, please contact the College Research Team:

Email: researchteam@college-optometrists.org