



UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS 2025-26

Introduction

1. To further the objects of its Research Fund Trust Deed, 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 Undergraduate Research Scholarships offered by the College from 1 October 2025 to 30 September 2026.

Purpose

3. The aim of the Undergraduate Research Scholarship scheme is to encourage high calibre optometry undergraduate students in the UK to consider a career in research or academia by sponsoring a short period of experience (equivalent to eight weeks) in an active research laboratory or practice. The project must be in addition to any work undertaken as part of an undergraduate degree. Scholars work under the direct supervision of a postdoctoral (or more senior) Supervisor and should receive an introduction to research at postgraduate level. Scholars are responsible for the writing of the project's Final Report, assisted by the Supervisor.
4. The application is submitted by the Supervisor, although Scholars are welcome to initiate an application or to be involved in some way and the Application Form provides an opportunity to indicate this where appropriate. Alternatively, Scholars can be recruited to a project once it has been funded.
5. The College may choose to identify strategic priorities or themes for particular Scholarships. If so, these will be announced in advance. Although please note that the College considers [the Sight Loss and Vision Priority Setting Partnership exercise](#) to be an important reference when considering funding applications and in the Application Form applicants will be asked to say which priority area their proposed research aligns with (if any).

Required units of an Undergraduate Research Scholarship

6. The purpose of the Scholarship is to give students some experience of research. It is expected that the student will gain experience in:

Introduction to research at postgraduate level:

- Why undertake research?
- Types of research
- Introduction to laboratory research
- Safety within the laboratory
- Ethical issues (including the use of human and animals in research, the

Helsinki Declaration, application procedures to Research and Ethics Committees)

Project design and data analysis:

- Focus should be on 'hands on research'
- Statistics
- Experimental design
- Participation in experiments
- Data collection

Computing and IT skills:

- Introduction to the laboratory and other institutional resources
- Literature searches
- MEDLINE, BIDS etc.
- Familiarisation with software research packages

Selection and award process

7. Applications are invited on a year-round basis, with Scholarships being available in a 'first come, first served' system from 1 October 2025 to 30 September 2026. Application Forms can be downloaded from the College website and should be submitted to researchteam@college-optometrists.org. Each institution may submit as many applications as they wish.
8. The selection of Undergraduate Research Scholarships is based on the scope and content of the project detailed in the Application Form completed and submitted by the proposed Supervisor. Please note that the College will look favourably on applications that have been initiated by or involved Scholars, where appropriate.
9. The research is expected to adhere to the College's Research Principles, as described in section [D45 of the College's Guidance for Professional Practice](#). If the research is in any way part of a clinical trial then that trial must be registered (or an adequate reason given for why it is not registered) and the trial number should be given in the application and the Final Report.
10. The award of Scholarships will be decided by the Research Committee and its decision is final.
11. All applicants, whether successful or not, will be notified of the outcome by the College.

Eligibility

12. Scholars must be student members of the College at the start of the Scholarship and remain in membership for the duration of the Award.
13. Scholars must be undergraduates on a UK optometry degree course, preferably in the penultimate year of their course, and be expected to achieve a first or upper second class honours degree.
14. Scholars may have undertaken an Undergraduate Research Scholarship previously, but if so then this should be stated in the Application Form and it should be made clear what additional skills will be gained and developed as a result of undertaking a second Scholarship.

15. Where the Undergraduate Research Scholarship is based on work that is part of a wider project, such as a PhD, how the Scholarship fits with the wider project should be made clear. Applications that are unable to explain this will be unsuccessful.
16. Applications for Scholarships are made on the understanding that the academic institution, Supervisor and Scholar agree to accept the Terms and Conditions relating to the Awards and any amendments issued during the course of the Award. On appointment Supervisors and Scholars will be sent an Acceptance Form to sign to indicate their acceptance of these conditions.
17. If an application is unsuccessful, the same applicant may not apply again until either
 - a) six months after the date the unsuccessful application was received by the College
 - or b) 1 October 2026 (whichever is sooner).

Number and location of Scholarships

18. The College offers up to two Undergraduate Research Scholarships for research projects at institutions within the UK each year.

Period of support

19. Scholarships are intended to provide an equivalent of about eight weeks of research experience. This can be undertaken in one block, over a summer break, or smaller blocks in other holiday periods or suitable gaps in the university calendar. The specific form that the Scholarship will take should be outlined in the Application Form. Where a Scholarship is to be undertaken in more than one block that covers a total period of more than six months, the Application should make clear what arrangements will be put in place to make sure the Scholarship remains coherent and able to deliver a genuine research project experience. Applications that are unable to demonstrate this will be unsuccessful.
20. This system is to allow a degree of flexibility in the Scholarships, which is important to allow Scholars to fit the Scholarship in around other undergraduate commitments. The College is open to applications that have different or novel ways of delivering the Scholarship, so long as the experience as a whole remains coherent. **Regardless of how the Scholarship is organised, the project Final Report should be submitted no more than three months after the end of the project.**

Financial provision

21. The value of Undergraduate Research Scholarships in 2025-26 will be £2,000. The Scholarship is for the maintenance of the Scholar and no contribution is made to the direct expenses of the project.

Further information

22. Assistance with any of the above may be obtained from the Research Team.

Email: researchteam@college-optometrists.org