POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH AWARD 2022: SWOLLEN OPTIC NERVES AND REFERRAL THRESHOLDS

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

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 Postdoctoral Research Award offered by the College in 2022, made possible by the generous donations of College members in response to a fundraising campaign.

PURPOSE

3. The Postdoctoral Research Award is intended to provide College members at postdoctoral level with an opportunity to be principal investigator on a research project. The primary aims of the Award are to:

- support a research project relevant to the College in the area of swollen optic nerves and referral thresholds;
- support promising postdoctoral researchers through the funding of an opportunity to propose and lead a research project;
- help in the acquisition of further research funding by award holders;
- support new researchers to become independent from previous research mentors and environments (where appropriate).

4. The Award is not intended to subsidise an existing postdoctoral project. It is instead to fund a new and specific research project to be undertaken either during an existing postdoctoral appointment (if permitted by the employing institution) or after existing funding has finished, on either a full or part-time basis.

5. Joint applications are accepted, so long as it is clear that both individuals will be adequately involved in the project.

6. The Award can be used to pay for equipment but should not be used to buy out teaching time. The funding may be used to fund a research assistant that the applicant will supervise, so long as the application makes clear how the project will still fulfil the main function of the Award in facilitating the applicant(s) to lead on the running of an externally-funded research project for the first time.

7. This Postdoctoral Research Award was made possible thanks to the generous donations of College members in response to a fundraising campaign, in which members were invited to vote for an area of research for the Award to focus on. The
area chosen was swollen optic nerves and referral thresholds, and so applications are invited on this topic only.

**SELECTION AND AWARD PROCESS**

8. The closing date for applications is 5pm, Tuesday 1 March 2022. The Application Form can be downloaded from the College website and should be submitted to researchteam@college-optometrists.org. College decisions are based on the scope and content of the project detailed in the Application Form.

9. The Research Committee will apply the following criteria when considering applications:

   - Is the research being advocated relevant to the College’s aims?
   - What will be the potential impact of the research, both for optometric practice and for the development of the Award holder?
   - Does the project represent a good learning experience for the applicant at this stage in their career?
   - Are the objectives achievable within the timescale and resources described?
   - Has the applicant demonstrated that they are a high-calibre postdoctoral researcher?
   - What opportunities might the Award create for the applicant?
   - Has an adequate level of support for the Award holder been confirmed by the Institution/Head of Department/Supervisor?

10. The award of Scholarships will be decided by the College’s Research Committee or a Panel of members of the Committee, and its decision is final.

**ELIGIBILITY**

11. Award holders must be members of the College at the start of the Award application process and remain in membership for the duration of the Award.

12. Award holders should have been awarded a PhD by the time the project for which the funding is awarded is due to start, and not be currently holding a full time lecturer/teaching position.

13. Applications for the Award are made on the understanding that the Award holder agrees to accept the Terms and Conditions relating to the Award and any amendments issued during the course of the Award. On appointment the Award holder will be sent an Acceptance of Award Form to sign to indicate acceptance of these conditions.

**LOCATION OF AWARDS**

14. The College offers the Award to institutions within the UK.

**PERIOD OF SUPPORT**

15. The Award holder and the College will agree a start date and completion date for the project. Projects should normally last no longer than one year.
FINANCIAL PROVISION

16. The maximum value of an Award is £20,000. A payment schedule will be discussed and agreed with the Award holder, but funds will normally be made available in three instalments:

- 40% at the start of the project on receipt of the Acceptance Form;
- 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.

FURTHER INFORMATION

17. Assistance with any of the above may be obtained from the research team.

Email: researchteam@college-optometrists.org
Phone: 020 7766 4346