



POSTGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS 2020

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 Postgraduate Scholarships offered by the College in 2020. It is to be read in conjunction with the Terms and Conditions for the Postgraduate Scholarships, available on [the College website](#).

PURPOSE

3. The College Postgraduate Scholarships support and encourage appropriate research into optometry and related subjects, as well as providing postgraduate optometrists with the opportunity to gain training in research methods leading to the awarding of a PhD. They are also intended to be collaborative through application by a team of co-applicants, to be led by the lead applicant, and to provide opportunities for newer researchers through the inclusion of at least one team member with less than five years since appointing to a position of lecturer (although mitigating circumstances will be taken into account where applicable). Three co-applicant spaces are provided on the Application Form for co-applicants, but a project may have fewer than or more than three co-applicants where appropriate, and applicants are welcome to provide more information about this if relevant in section C of the Form.

ADVICE TO POTENTIAL APPLICANTS

4. Potential applicants are advised to consider their proposed project from start to finish, and to ensure that potential limitations and obstacles (and possible methods of compensating for them) are described in the application. The most common reasons for an unsuccessful application have been the lack of information and explanation about issues in and around methodology and a failure to demonstrate that the proposed project has a reasonable chance of delivering the outcomes suggested. Applications must ensure that the College's Research Committee has enough information to decide whether a project is feasible and will produce evidence that is methodologically sound and of interest.

SELECTION AND AWARD PROCESS

5. The closing date for applications is 5.00pm, Thursday 13 February 2020. Application Forms can be downloaded from [the College website](#) and should be submitted to researchteam@college-optometrists.org. Please note that each department can only submit a maximum of two applications which must be considered and prioritised by the Head of Department. This process should also involve evaluating applications to ensure they have taken into account the advice offered in point 4, above.

6. The selection of Postgraduate Scholarships is based on the scope and content of the project detailed in the Application Form completed and submitted by the proposed Supervisor. Section C of the completed Application Form should include information that makes clear how the Scholar will develop and benefit from undertaking the described research project, as well as how the project meets the below criteria.
7. The Research Committee will apply the following criteria and weighting when considering applications:
 - importance of the research question to optometry and related subjects;
 - originality of the research;
 - appropriateness of the study design;
 - provision of adequate support in the Department.
8. The awarding of Postgraduate Scholarships will be decided by the Research Committee, at its meeting on Wednesday 3 June 2020, and its decision is final.
9. All applicants, whether successful or not, will be notified of the outcome by the College.

PEER REVIEWERS

10. Applicants should nominate two peers who can review the application using a review form which reflects the criteria set out in paragraph 7. **Please ensure you have contacted these reviewers in advance to ask them to be a reviewer, and also to ensure that they will be available from 16 March to 6 April 2020 (when the review will take place).** Applicants may not nominate as a peer reviewer any person who will themselves be submitting a Postgraduate Scholarship application to the College, who is a co-applicant on any application, who is Head of Department at any submitting institution, or who is a currently a College Research Committee member (see Appendix A for membership).
11. The Chair of the Research Committee will select one of the nominated names to carry out the review, and the College will also assign an independent reviewer from the College's pool of reviewers registered with the College for this purpose. The Chair may also contact additional external reviewers to provide a reference at their discretion.
12. The forms will be returned to the College and collated. Please be aware that you will hopefully be asked to respond to reviewer feedback (likely to be in the period between 20 April and 5 May 2020) prior to the reviews being anonymised and made available to the Research Committee for the selection process. The Committee will not be bound by the peer review or any rankings made as part of this process.

RESERVE PROJECTS

13. If a Scholarship is not taken up by 31 December 2020, the money set aside for the Scholarship will normally be held back until the following year when another studentship will be made available. However, if a reserve project has been chosen and is in a position to immediately commence work from 1 January of the following

year, the Research Committee can, at their discretion, transfer the Scholarship to a reserve selected by the Research Committee.

14. Alternatively, the Research Committee may, at their discretion, award a Scholarship to the original Supervisor to commence at a later date.

ELIGIBILITY

15. Scholars must be members of the College at the start of the research project and remain in membership for the duration of the Scholarship. As Scholarship projects take place in the UK, UK membership is required. If a Scholar is in overseas membership when recruited to the Scholarship then they must become eligible for, and obtain, UK membership as soon as possible.
16. The project Supervisor need not be a Fellow or Member of the College. If not an optometrist, the Supervisor should be an ophthalmologist, orthoptist, recognised vision scientist or recognised academic or clinician from a relevant discipline.
17. The requirements of the Trust Deed that governs the Research Fund that supports these awards mean that priority is given to applications from UK Optometry Departments. Applicants from other UK institutions, or other departments within the UK institutions that have an optometry undergraduate programme are allowed, and will be considered within the terms permitted by the Trust Deed.
18. Selection of Scholars is the responsibility of the successful academic institution. The institution must satisfy itself that the Scholar is fit to undertake the Scholarship and that they will conduct themselves in a manner that will not discredit the College. Scholars should have been awarded a First or Upper-second Class Honours degree in optometry. Exceptionally, a Lower-second Class Honours degree will be accepted by the College subject to the submission of satisfactory evidence (by the project Supervisor to the Research Committee) of the proposed Scholar's academic ability and suitability to undertake the research project.
19. Applications for Postgraduate Scholarships are made on the understanding that the academic institution, Supervisor and Scholar agree to accept the Terms and Conditions relating to the Scholarship and any amendments issued during the course of the Scholarship. On appointment Supervisors and Scholars will be sent an Acceptance Form to sign to indicate their acceptance of these conditions.

LOCATION OF SCHOLARSHIPS

20. Scholarships may only be awarded for research projects at institutions within the UK.

PERIOD OF SUPPORT

21. Postgraduate Scholarships will normally commence at the beginning of October. However, a period of grace up to 31 December is permitted in the event of an early withdrawal or late nomination of the Scholar.
22. Successful applications which are subsequently cancelled will not have priority in any subsequent application for a Scholarship.
23. Postgraduate Scholarships will normally be for a maximum period of three years full-time research. Applications for part-time study will be considered, but as these

normally extend over a period substantially longer than 3 years, applicants should provide information on the following in their applications:

- (a) the institution's current regulations on part-time study, including total time permitted from start of PhD to submission of thesis;
- (b) information about the proposed duration of part-time study along with a detailed timetable and project plan for the entire period of study;
- (c) confirmation from the relevant senior staff at the institution that the Scholar will receive appropriate support and resources to undertake the project described on a part-time basis.

24. Where the College awards a Postgraduate Scholarship to a part-time Scholar, the total amount payable will be the same as for a Scholarship granted for full-time study, but the payment schedule will, subject to agreement with the institution's Finance Department, take account of the extended period of study.

FINANCIAL PROVISION

25. The value of the Postgraduate Scholarship will be aligned to the Medical Research Council (MRC) first-year rate. It will be made up of the tuition fee paid to the institution (benchmarked against fees recommended by the MRC), the maintenance grant paid to the Scholar, and an essential research expenses fee paid to the Supervisor. This is to cover costs such as stationery, chemicals (or other experimental consumables) and payments to patients and observers, but not to cover publication costs, training courses, event attendance costs or technical equipment. The value of the Scholarship will be reviewed annually in line with the MRC Awards.

26. The annual value of Postgraduate Scholarships in 2020 is £21,836.00 within London and £19,836.00 outside London.

27. The Scholarship is made up as follows:

	Within London	Outside London
Tuition	£4,327.00	£4,327.00
Maintenance	£17,009.00	£15,009.00
Essential research expenses	£500.00	£500.00
Total	£21,836.00	£19,836.00

28. Payment is made in annual instalments on receipt of invoices from the Finance Officer at the institution. After deduction of the tuition fee, the institution pays the maintenance grant to the Scholar, and the essential research expenses to the Supervisor.

29. The value of the Scholar's final year payment may increase to include open access publication funding. This is to allow outputs from the Scholarship to be disseminated in open access journals. This funding is made available once the Scholar has requested it and this request has been reviewed and approved by the College.

30. Scholars are also allotted a College Travel Bursary for use during their Scholarship. These are for a value of £1,000 for the costs of attending a conference, and are separate to the College's other Travel Bursaries. The Scholar can apply for their Travel Bursary at any time by contacting the College.
31. Scholars will be expected to provide a poster presentation at the College conference, Optometry Tomorrow, no later than the final year of their Scholarship. Reasonable expenses incurred in attending the conference will be reimbursed directly to the Scholar, in addition to the funding provision described above. Please note, the College Travel Bursary may not be used to attend Optometry Tomorrow.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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

Email: researchteam@college-optometrists.org

Phone: 020 7766 4346

Appendix A – Research Committee Members

Professor Leon Davies FCOptom PhD FAAO SFHEA (Chair)

Stephanie Campbell MCOptom (Vice-Chair)

Professor Peter Allen BSc (Hons) PhD FCOptom

Professor Paul Artes MCOptom BSc PhD

Lorcan Butler MCOptom

Emeritus Professor David Caplin

Tony Cowburn BSc (Hons)

Dr Irene Ctori MCOptom

Professor Chris Hammond BA Hons MA BM Bch MRCP (UK) FRCOphth MD

Angharad Hobby BSc (Hons) MCOptom

Professor Edward Mallen MCOptom BSc PhD (President Ex-officio)

Matt Roney BSc MCOptom

Dr Mary-Ann Sherratt MCOptom PhD DipGlauc Dip TP (IP)

Dr Laura Sweeney MCOptom Dip TP (IP)