



Wellcome Trust Applications

General Guidance

Who are the Wellcome Trust and what do they fund?

The Wellcome Trust are an independent UK-based global charitable foundation dedicated to understanding and improving health. Wellcome's vision is to *"support science to solve the urgent health challenges facing everyone"* and achieve extraordinary improvements in human and animal health. Their programme of discovery research crosses a wide range of disciplines where there is potential for important and unanticipated discoveries about life, health and wellbeing to tackle these great challenges and inspire improvements in human health. In the [Wellcome Trust Strategy](#) three programme of work areas, based on urgent health challenges, are outlined:

- [Mental health](#)
- [Infectious disease](#)
- [Climate and health](#)

However, Wellcome support research in many areas of [discovery research](#) and advise that applicants should not force their research into one of those three areas where a natural fit does not exist.

Wellcome run three discovery research schemes with three deadlines for each per year, for individuals and teams of researchers, covering all disciplines where the research has the potential to improve human life, health and wellbeing and aligns with the [Wellcome Trust funding remit](#):

- [Wellcome Early-Career Awards](#) – for early-career researchers who are ready to develop their research identity. Through innovative projects, they will deliver shifts in understanding that could improve human life, health and wellbeing. By the end of the award, they will be ready to lead their own independent research programme.
- [Wellcome Career Development Awards](#) – for mid-career researchers who have the potential to be international research leaders. They will develop their research capabilities, drive innovative programmes of work and deliver significant shifts in understanding that could improve human life, health and wellbeing.
- [Wellcome Discovery Awards](#) – for established researchers and teams who want to pursue bold and creative research ideas to deliver significant shifts in understanding that could improve human life, health and wellbeing.

With the Discovery Awards, Wellcome want to unlock individual potential, provide researchers with time and freedom and to allow space for teamwork and collaboration.

Getting started

- Browse the [available funding opportunities](#) that Wellcome offers.
- Check that your research fits into [Wellcome's Discovery funding remit](#).

If you have **any** doubts that your proposed research may not align with Wellcome's Discovery funding remit, you are **strongly** encouraged to contact Wellcome in advance via the details provided on the call

page to confirm that your proposal is within remit and suitable to be submitted. **Out of remit applications will be withdrawn by Wellcome.**

- Check that you are eligible to apply for the funding scheme you have identified.

If you have **any** doubts about your eligibility to apply to the specific funding scheme, you are strongly encouraged to contact Wellcome in advance via the details provided on the call page to confirm that you are eligible to apply.

- Download the Sample Application Form from the call webpage to ensure you are aware of the full application requirements.
- Assess the next deadline date and UCD internal deadline dates for budget and proposal review as set by the Proposal Support Team on UCD's Research Management System (RMS). Will you have sufficient time to?
 - formulate your idea.
 - consult with the UCD Research Office and your Head of School.
 - carry out research related discussions with your school, sponsor and mentor (if applicable).
 - obtain all required letters of support and develop your proposal.
 - engage with the UCD Research Office for budget and proposal review.
 - engage with colleagues for peer review of your proposal prior to submission.

You must allow at least 6 working days for budget and proposal review by the Research Office in advance of the funder deadline. Applicants can continue to work to improve their proposal during that time. For Discovery Applications, The Wellcome Trust strongly recommend that you do not submit if the proposal is not fully ready. If insufficient time is available to you, please consider submitting to the next available deadline. Proposal submission should not be overly rushed and will disadvantage your submission. You should plan ahead and start your proposal well in advance of a call deadline.

- Create a user account on [Wellcome's Funding Platform](#) and add UCD as your administering organisation.
- Inform Proposal Support of your intention to apply and start a draft on the relevant Funding Opportunity on the UCD Research Management System (RMS). Note the UCD internal deadlines for the application round and stick to them.
- Your Head of School will need to be your sponsor for the application. Make sure they are aware of what is required from them as part of the application process and if they agree to be your sponsor, you can invite them to be your sponsor on the Wellcome Funding Platform. Once they have accepted the invitation, they will be able to edit their section of the application.
- If applicable, work out if you are eligible to claim salary from the award or whether you require confirmation from your Head of School that they will extend your contract, if successful. If in doubt, or if you are an Ad Astra Fellow, please contact Proposal Support.
- Check to see if any Letters of Support are required. Letters of support will need to be strong, personal, and very supportive (see letter of support tips below).

Application process

Wellcome provides advice on writing a grant application which is available [here](#). Wellcome Funding Advisory committees, panels and expert review groups responsible for shortlisting and interviewing those applying for funding can be viewed at this [link](#). The application process relevant to individual calls is outlined on each specific call webpage.

Institutional endorsement is required in order to submit your application on the Wellcome Funding Platform. UCD can view your proposal on Wellcome's online system once UCD is added as the host institution to the application. Applicants should also inform the Proposal Support Team via email at proposalsupport@ucd.ie that an application is in progress. The final version of the application should be ready on the Wellcome Funding Platform by 10am the day before the final deadline to ensure that UCD Research can review the application on the system and have sufficient time to return the application to the applicant for changes, if necessary, or to contact Wellcome should there be any technical issues. Sample application forms are available on each call page and should be assessed by the applicant prior to starting an application to ensure they are aware of the full application requirements. Grant writing support documents are available on the [UCD Research Portal](#) or from the Proposal Support team via email. Applicants can also contact the Proposal Support team for any aspect of assistance required in preparing a proposal.

UCD Tips

- Wellcome place emphasis on funding the next generation of research leaders that lead on creating a positive, equal, diverse and inclusive research culture and environment. Wellcome want ethical, open, engaged and inclusive research, so take these aspects of the proposal seriously and build these principles into the research design and make this clear in the proposal, including timeframes and workplans.
- Wellcome advises that you:
 - Get feedback on your proposal draft
 - Think about audience –the different panels with varying levels of expertise that will assess your proposal (see below)
 - Make it as accessible as possible – it should be clear to a lay reader what the goal and impact is
 - Have contingency plans – ensure you anticipate and plan for any potential setbacks
- Research Environment is 25% of the score. Demonstrate your experience and your contributions to the research experience of others (or the research culture of your Institution or lab). Wellcome want to see evidence of EDI (equity, diversity and inclusion) in a personal (to applicant) context and relevant to career stage. Spend time reading Wellcome's strategies on [Improving Research Environments](#) to ensure you understand their priorities in this area.
- Successful applicants write compelling stories and make it clear that if their goal is achieved, what it will mean to the field and to them.
- Be aware of who is on your review panels – there is a subject and scheme specific advisory group for the shortlisting stage and another panel for the interview stage. You can look up the members of each advisory group/ panel [here](#). There are only 25-30 applications per round, and panel members read every application so it will be given thorough examination. Your application may also go to an expert reviewer. Be aware that you are writing to potentially three different audiences – from expert to general – and the first bar is to pass a very diverse group of panel members.
- Review the [Wellcome Trust guidance to committee members for assessing applications](#) to see what your assessors are looking for when they assess your application.

What do Wellcome Assess?

Wellcome assess projects under the 3 Ps:

- **Person:** Track record is assessed relative to the applicant's career stage. Publications provide evidence of significant research contribution and impact. The proposed research needs to promise something entirely new where it is building on past research by the applicant.
- **Project:** It needs to be important, what will change through this research and why it is relevant now? How will the research be carried out? What is the feasibility of the approach and of carrying out the research? Is the proposal convincing? Is it innovative? Will the outcomes be significant? Does the proposal ask a question and frame the proposal around this question? Tell and convince (assert, then justify). Be concise, relevant and clear. Don't assume prior knowledge of the reviewers or use specialist jargon, the proposal needs to be understandable outside of the field of research, or it may not make it through each stage.
- **Place:** The place/environment (institution/School/College/People) provides appropriate support to carry out the research (including an advisory board). Institutional letters need to show appropriate knowledge of the applicant, the research and the resources required and need to be supportive.

In your application, make sure you have covered:

Person:

- Track record: publications, talks, prizes, supervisions, grants, patents, impacts on policy, public engagement.
- Has the required knowledge to carry out research (or knowledge within the team)?
- Career development plan and long-term aspirations.
- Evidence of research independence, where relevant.
- Show ownership of the project.
- Why the is applicant the right person to undertake this research?
- How would this proposal take the interests of the applicant in a new direction and develop his/her research career?
- How will the applicant help to create a positive research culture and what evidence do they have for this already?

Project:

- Is the research question clear and does it highlight its quality and importance.
- Sufficient information provided on the approach to be taken.
- Rationale, feasibility, expertise.
- Contingency plans provided.
- Preliminary data, power calculations.
- Appropriate resources to carry out the research illustrated.
- Enables research independence.
- Relevance of background information clearly presented.
- Latest advances in the field of research presented.
- Why is now a good time to carry out this research?
- In what way is the project ethical, open, engaged and inclusive?

Place:

- The quality and suitability of the research environment discussed
- Appropriate expertise/collaboration to carry out the research and to develop research networks into the future.

- The candidate's choice of research sponsors, how this will benefit the applicant and research
- Strong institutional support

Useful resources for preparing an application

- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) at UCD:

[UCD Research Careers and Professional Development](#)

[UCD People and Organisation Development](#)

- Public Patient Involvement (PPI)/Public Engagement:

<https://www.ucd.ie/publicengagement/>

- Ethics:

<https://www.ucd.ie/researchethics/>

- Outputs management and sharing:

[Data Management Plans](#)

[UCD Technology Transfer Office](#)

[UCD Intellectual Property Policy](#)

- Carbon Offset:

<https://wellcome.org/grant-funding/guidance/policies-grant-conditions/environmental-sustainability-policy>

- Research Culture:

[Research Integrity](#)

[Research Integrity Training](#)

[Research Culture Portal Page](#)

[ReCLAIM - UCD Research Culture - Local Actions, Initiatives and Measures](#) (funded by the Wellcome Trust)

Letter of Support Tips

- Do not use a template letter. Each letter of support must be completely individual to the applicant and research for whom it is written.
- It is important to show genuine commitment to the proposal and research proposed.
- There should be a clear and specific fit for applicant and research to the department for example to a specific strategic area of the institution. This should not be phrased in generic terms but in detail.
- The letter should outline access to space and facilities.
- Supervision/mentorship details should be covered.

- The institution should support the time commitment of the applicant(s) with protected research or teaching time stated in number of hours or percentage of time.
- Career development opportunities stemming from the proposed research should be emphasised.
- In kind/financial contributions should be highlighted e.g., contributions to equipment costs, provision of students, start-up costs.
- Confirmation that the institution will be able to sign up to grant conditions should be included
- Track record and potential of the applicant along with suitability of the proposed research to their experience and training should be stated, with exciting and innovative aspects of both particularly referred to.
- The letter should be completely supportive of both the applicant and the research

Interview

Wellcome provides advice [here](#) for preparing for an interview.

UCD Tips:

- Environment: The Panel will almost certainly be a large group of members in a large room, but the Chair and a small number of them will lead the process and questions.



- Prepare: if you don't prepare sufficiently, you may find the overall process to be overwhelming. Read the feedback provided in advance, but be aware that questions on the day will not be limited to that material.
- Talk: to past candidates and to Wellcome themselves, if possible.
- Practice: **Do one or more mock interviews.** They will make you better at your real interview. UCD Research can assist in setting this up if needed.
- Be respectful: dress appropriately, take guidance from everyone involved in the process seriously and **don't try anything that circumvents the procedures laid out by Wellcome** (e.g. bringing in additional 'last minute' data/handouts for the Panel).
- Engage properly: it is OK to be wrong or flexible during the interview and to recognise that something has been identified that needs to be followed up. However, you should not give ground all the time – be prepared to constructively rebut a point raised if you are equipped to. But recognise and allow that often the definite outcomes of the research will not be known until it is underway.
- Be yourself: as much as you can be in a pressurised situation, try to be confident, enthusiastic, and positive about your research **and your vision as a researcher.** A Wellcome award is a significant investment **in you.** If you need to pause to compose your thoughts (or even take a drink of water), **you can do so.**
- Embrace the opportunity: all attention in the room is on you and your research. This is your opportunity to talk about your research and to add/clarify on what you have written in your proposal. If there are any slight lingering doubts (there usually are with many projects), it is your chance to get the proposal over the line.