

SULSA Early Career Development Funding Guidelines

Scope

This funding aims to support researchers in their endeavors to develop their own independent academic research career. The funds can be used for a variety of activities within these categories:

- Travel (to meet a collaborator or for training purposes – travel to conferences or organised meetings is not included)
- Training in new techniques/skills
- Consumables costs
- Facility access

Awarded funds cannot be used for salaries.

The project must be used to foster collaboration which could fall within following aims:

- Building a new academic collaboration (cross-disciplinary, cross-university, international)
- Upskilling of the applicant through collaborative training
- Generation of pilot data and/or developing a pathway to commercialisation with an external collaborator

You can apply for up to £4,000 and we hope to award a minimum of 8 projects.

Eligibility

- This call is open to the following SULSA members only: University of Aberdeen, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, James Hutton Institute, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews, University of Strathclyde, University of the West of Scotland. Please refer to our **SULSA Funding Eligibility Key** at the end of this document to confirm you are eligible for this call.
- The lead applicant must be a postdoctoral researcher, research assistant, technical staff member or teaching fellow actively pursuing an independent academic career trajectory (Please see eligibility key).
- The lead applicant must be employed by a SULSA university or institute. Their contract must be valid for the duration of the funding.
- You require at least one collaborator (from outwith your own university). They can be from a university, industry or public sector and do not need to work in Scotland. Your

collaborator can be a PhD student or research staff member, if applicable. The co-applicant/collaborator's contribution must show demonstrable benefit to the project and lead applicant's career progression as described in their research vision.

- Postdoctoral Researchers: if you hold a fellowship that **ONLY** covers your salary costs, then you are eligible to apply for this funding. If you hold a single research grant worth £50k or more then you are no longer eligible to apply for this funding.

Funding Information and Conditions

- Projects must have defined milestones.
- Your project must be completed within 12 months of being awarded, or (if less) the duration of your contract at your host institution.
- The project must show a pathway to further funding from external sources.
- You must have your application signed by your PI to demonstrate their support.
- You must have a Letter of Support signed by your co-applicant/collaborator.
- Any output from this funding must acknowledge SULSA's support and SULSA should be notified.

Judging Criteria

- Project feasibility, objectives, and proposed outcomes
- Novelty and importance of the research described
- Track record of the applicant
- Impact for the applicant and broader community
- Support of your networks
- Sustainability (potential to leverage further funds)

Use of Generative AI

SULSA does not encourage the use of generative AI in applications but permits the use of such tools for language refinement, editing and formatting, in alignment with [UKRI's Policy](#).

Key Dates

- **Call Opens:** Monday 18th January 2027
- **Application Deadline:** Monday 1st March 2027
- **Applicants Informed of Outcome:** by mid-April 2027
- **Funding End Date:** 30th April 2028

Submitting Your Application

Please submit your application (**a single PDF**) to jill.inkster@glasgow.ac.uk at SULSA by **Monday 1st March 2027 at 5pm.**

Notification of Outcome

Successful applications will be notified by email by **mid-April 2027.**

Payment of Funds

Funds will be transferred to your lead Institution and must be spent within 12 months of the date of transfer.

Awardee Reporting

You must provide the SULSA administration with project updates and outcomes when requested for reporting purposes. You will receive a survey to complete 3-months post-project completion and 1-year post-project completion.

Outputs should acknowledge SULSA for funding and the SULSA team should be notified via email. If this project leads to a published article, or leverages grant funding, please contact the SULSA administration to make them aware.

FAQs

1. Who is eligible to apply for this funding?

Postdoctoral researchers, research assistants, technicians and technical staff can apply. Postdoctoral researchers that have secured a single grant of £50k or more for research costs are NOT eligible to apply. This does NOT include fellowship costs covering salary, only the research costs. You may be asked to show proof of this if you hold a fellowship that covers both salary and research costs. Research assistants, technicians and technical staff must hold a PhD or demonstrate an equivalent level of expertise through experience and must be actively pursuing an independent academic research career track. The lead applicant's contract must be valid for the duration of the funding. Application form must be signed by their PI/line manager.

This call is open to the following SULSA members only: University of Aberdeen, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, James Hutton Institute, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews, University of Strathclyde, UWS.

2. Can I apply if my contract is changing or coming to an end?

The lead applicant's contract must be valid for the duration of the funding and the application form must be signed by their PI/line manager.

If your contract will change throughout the duration of the project but remain at a SULSA member university/research institute, then you should include the signature of both your current and future PI/line managers to demonstrate their support for the completion of the project.

If your contract will change throughout the duration of the project and you will move to a non-SULSA member university/research institute, you must inform SULSA and have your current and future PI/Line Managers sign the application. Any outputs from the funding must acknowledge SULSA and the SULSA member university/research institute where the funding was awarded.

If your contract is due to expire throughout the duration of the project but you are likely to receive bridge funding or follow-on funding, you must include a letter signed by your PI/Line manager stating this with your application.

3. I am a postdoctoral researcher and have been awarded a fellowship, am I eligible?

Postdoctoral researchers that have secured a single grant of £50k or more for research costs are NOT eligible to apply. This does NOT include fellowship costs covering salary, only the research costs. You may be asked to show proof of this if you hold a fellowship that covers both salary and research costs.

For example, if your fellowship is worth £400k but either only covers your salary or has less than £50k allocated for research/consumables costs then you are eligible to apply for the Early Career Development Fund. If the grant covers more than £50k in research/consumables costs then you are no longer eligible to apply.

4. I am a research assistant/technician/technical staff member, am I eligible?

The lead applicant must be a postdoctoral researcher, research assistant, technical staff member or teaching fellow actively pursuing an independent academic career trajectory (Please see eligibility key).

Research assistants, technicians and technical members of staff must hold a PhD (have completed their viva and corrections) or be able to demonstrate equivalent expertise through experience (we may ask for evidence of this when awarded). The applicant must be actively pursuing or transitioning into an independent academic research career track and evidence of this may be requested when awarded. Evidence can include statements from PI/line managers, publications, training/review records, etc.

5. Who can act as co-applicant/collaborator?

Applications must include at least one (maximum 5) co-applicants/collaborators from outwith the lead applicants university/research institute. Co/applicants/collaborators can be from the public or private sector including international, cross-sectoral or cross-disciplinary contributors. The co-applicant/collaborators role must be clearly stated in the application and show benefit to the project and the lead applicant's career progression as outlined in their research vision.

Whilst co-applicants/collaborators can be at any career stage, projects that demonstrate development opportunities for PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, research assistants, technicians or technical staff as co-applicants/collaborators are encouraged. Reciprocal exchange of knowledge or training between the lead applicant and co-applicant/collaborator is also encouraged.

Upskilling/training must be achieved through a collaborative project rather than through attendance of a prescribed course/workshop. Exceptions include if the training course is a part of the collaborative project and training allows development of the lead applicant to deliver the proposed project.

Applications focused on the commercial potential of a research project can include co-applicants/collaborators from the public sector, third sector, or private companies supporting the commercialization of research e.g., enterprise agencies, Entrepreneurs in Residence, industrial mentors.

6. What can the funds be used for?

The funds can be used for a variety of activities within these categories:

- Travel (to meet a collaborator or for training purposes – travel to conferences or organised meetings is not included)
- Training in new techniques/skills
- Consumables costs
- Facility access

Awarded funds cannot be used for salaries or to pay staff for their contribution to the project. The project must be used to foster collaboration which could fall within following aims:

- Building a new academic collaboration (cross-disciplinary, cross-university, international)
- Upskilling of the applicant through collaborative training
- Generation of pilot data and/or developing a pathway to commercialisation with an external collaborator

The project should show clear benefit to the applicant's career progression as outlined in the research vision.

SULSA Funding Eligibility Key

Please refer to our funding eligibility key for all SULSA funding calls:

SULSA FUNDING ELIGIBILITY KEY

