MQ Fellows Award 2017
Guidance for Applicants

Introduction

MQ: Transforming Mental Health is seeking talented researchers with bold ideas who aspire to be the next generation of research leaders in mental health. With the MQ Fellows Award, we aim to support the most promising early career scientists, clinician-scientists and researchers who are asking the difficult and challenging questions that will bring transformational advances in mental health science. We seek to fund a diverse portfolio, including across basic, social and clinical aspects of mental health.

In addition to our existing MQ Fellows Award, we are very pleased to announce that this year we will be offering 3 co-funded Fellows Awards. We have partnered with:

- **Arthritis Research UK** – the leading authority on arthritis in the UK – to co-fund one UK-based Fellow;
- **Autistica** – the UK’s leading autism research charity – to co-fund one UK-based Fellow;
- **The Stanley Center for Psychiatric Research at Broad Institute** – which focuses on severe mental illness – to co-fund one Fellow based in a Low and Middle Income Country focused on neuropsychiatric genetics.

Purpose of the Awards

MQ is seeking out and supporting the best early career scientists and clinician-scientists as they work to launch their independent research careers in the field of mental health. The Awards are open to researchers from all disciplines related to mental health research. Research can be based in the laboratory, clinic or field, and may involve experimental, theoretical, social science or medical humanities approaches. It must be relevant to the cause, treatment or prevention of mental illness.

For the second year, MQ have partnered with **Arthritis Research UK**. Together, we recognise the significant mental health burden that musculoskeletal disease can bring, in particular as a result of chronic pain, and the impact that this can have on quality of life. For this award we would encourage applications that examine mental health conditions associated with musculoskeletal disorders.
In 2017, we have also partnered with the UK’s leading autism research charity Autistica. Both MQ and Autistica understand that mental health problems are highly prevalent in autism, and that understanding and tackling these problems is a research priority for the autism community. For this award we are seeking applications targeted towards novel research into mental health issues directly associated with autism.

Additionally, MQ has partnered with The Stanley Center for Psychiatric Research at Broad Institute. The Stanley Center focuses on severe mental illness and has recently expanded collection efforts in Africa and other Low and Middle Income Countries (LMIC). This award will support activity targeted towards novel research into mental health issues by offering a Fellows Award to an early-career scientist based in a LMIC focused on neuropsychiatric genetics. To find out more information about the MQ & Stanley Center Fellows Award, please see Appendix 1.

In supporting early career investigators, MQ aim to complement on-going efforts to nurture the academic research leaders of tomorrow. We are seeking Applicants who are establishing their independence. Awardees will join a community of MQ supporters and friends who are championing research progress across all sectors of mental health research.

MQ is committed to catalysing interdisciplinary approaches to transforming mental health research. Consequently, awardees will demonstrate their commitment to interdisciplinary research.

What's included in all Awards?

All MQ Fellows Awards and co-funded Awards will provide up to £75,000 ($95,000) per year for three years, or up to £225,000 ($285,000) in total funding.

These funds may be used for any of the following:

- As start-up funding for a specific project or transition funding for a current project
- For direct research costs
- And/or for salary support
  - For the applicant themselves
  - For research assistance staff as appropriate

Indirect costs, such as non-specific estimated costs, including estates costs, library costs, finance and HR costs, are not eligible for funding.

Please ensure you familiarise yourself with and can agree to MQ’s Sponsored Research Policies before beginning an application.
Eligibility

The MQ Fellows Programme is designed to support early career researchers investigating questions that will ultimately improve the quality of life for people affected by mental illness. Applicants will have made an outstanding start to their research career as demonstrated by their research results, publications and career track record to date.

Researchers need to be fully committed to this path and at a career stage that demonstrates this commitment. **We are seeking Applicants who are establishing their independence through their intellectual efforts and leadership.** Applicants will be able to demonstrate that they are either newly independent or will be independent by the time the awards are finalised (end of 2017). This award is not suitable for post-doctoral research.

**The onus to demonstrate appropriate career stage falls on the Applicant. As there are many ways to make the transition to independent researcher status,** successful Applicants will make clear their career path and eligibility for this award, and just how they envision that the MQ award will help them make meaningful contributions to advances in mental health research. Investigators who are fortunate to have other substantial funding commitments (research support in excess of £250,000/year, excluding FEC/indirects) are asked not to apply and will not be considered to be appropriate for this Programme.

**Eligible Applicants must:**

- Be **early career researchers establishing their independence:**
  - With a **PhD, DPhil, DClinPsy, MBBS, MD or equivalent**
  - By end of 2017, have accumulated **3-7 years** (whole-time-equivalent) research experience equivalent in nature to postdoctoral research,
  - Be able to show that this award will help establish your independence relative to your current position,

- Be able to demonstrate in their submitted application:
  - That their proposed project addresses a question relevant to mental health, such as the diagnosis, treatment or prevention of mental illness,
  - Consideration of interdisciplinarity.

- Be eligible to enter the UK for an interview and to participate in annual meetings, if (s)he is not a British national. Applicants are responsible for obtaining their own visa, if required.

- Complete and submit their application in English.

Applicants **will be considered ineligible** if the application form is submitted

- in an incomplete state
- in a format other than requested
- after the stated deadline
MQ recognises that good research takes place in supportive environments and will assess applications accordingly. The **host institution** should be well recognised in the field and provide strong support for independent research. MQ will accept applications naming either non-profit or for-profit host institutions, providing that these criteria can be met. MQ reserves the right to request additional information to assess institutional eligibility.

The application should be accompanied by a statement of support from the Head of Department of the host institution. The reference should demonstrate why the Applicant deserves a prestigious MQ Fellows Award. It should focus on the nature of the Applicant’s contribution to mental health research and comment on how an MQ Award would be transformational to the Applicant.

**Application Process**

The 2017 Fellows Awards follow a **3-stage application process**. In addition to the MQ Fellows Awards, in 2017 we are offering three co-funded Fellows Awards. **Please note that you can only apply for one of the Awards.**

**Stage 1: Statement of Intent**

Applicants are required to complete and submit a Stage 1 application form. This is comprised of a short Statement of Intent, an abbreviated curriculum vitae form, and a statement of support from the Applicant’s Head of Department. This must be submitted through MQ’s [online application system](#) by **Tuesday April 25th at 17.00 BST**.

The Stage 1 Statement of Intent requires a statement of support and signature from the Applicant’s Head of Department. **Please ensure that sufficient time is left to obtain this before the relevant deadlines.**

Applications will be reviewed and shortlisted by MQ staff, the MQ Fellows Committee and, for the co-funded Awards, representatives from corresponding organisation’s staff and committee.

Applications that do not meet submission criteria will not be processed further. Applicants will be informed of the results of the Stage 1 review by the end of June, 2017.

**Stage 2: Invited Proposal**

Shortlisted Candidates will be invited to complete Stage 2 of the process.

At Stage 2, Applicants are asked to propose a **Mentor** for their project, who can be from any field, and whose research is pertinent to the proposed project.

Stage 2 Invited Proposals will be further reviewed by the MQ Fellows Committee, representatives from the MQ’s co-funding partners (where relevant) and external reviewers. Those successful at this stage will be invited to attend an interview.
Stage 3: Invited Interview
Finalists will be interviewed by the Committee on 30th or 31st October 2017, in London, UK. Invited Interviews will be conducted in London, UK and related expenses will be covered by MQ. By submitting a Stage 2 Invited Proposal form, Candidates verify their ability to participate in the interview process as scheduled. Final decisions for the 2017 Fellows Awards will be made by the MQ Fellows Committee, on the basis of Candidates’ Stage 2 Invited Proposal form, external review, and performance at interview.

Assessment
Stage 1 Statement of Intent applications that are sent to the Fellows Committee will typically be assessed on:

- **The applicant:** whether (s)he is at an appropriate stage of career and establishing independence (neither too senior nor too junior), has an established commitment to research in mental health, and would receive substantial benefit from the award.
- **The project:** whether it is important to the field of mental health, its potential to transform the field, its scientific merit, and its interdisciplinarity.
- **The environment:** suitability of the institution and department.

For Stage 2 Invited Proposals, external reviews will be sought. Stage 3 Invited Interviews will be conducted by the MQ Fellows Committee, which comprises eight scientists and two ex-officio Trustees; MQ staff will also be present. Representative(s) from Arthritis Research UK, Autistica and the Stanley Center will also take part in the committee for relevant applications.

Please note that MQ retains the right to invite additional reviewers to participate as needed in any stage of our application processes.

**Interdisciplinarity** is an important value for MQ. We are committed to catalysing multi-disciplinary approaches to transforming mental health. By this we mean projects and people at the intersection of disciplines and approaches, whose work crosses traditional boundaries between disciplines. We also mean interdisciplinary work that promotes the sharing of information and knowledge across boundaries.

Applicants can demonstrate their commitment to interdisciplinary work in many ways. This might be through a research question or methodologies that span two or more disciplines, or through the close involvement of a Mentor with suitably complementary background or skills. It is up to Applicants to show how their career and proposed research is interdisciplinary.

**Code of Conduct**

MQ’s Board of Trustees and members of the MQ Fellows Committee are required to abide by a Code of Conduct, which is designed to protect and preserve the integrity of our Advisers and our processes.
Part of this code states that **Committee members may not discuss any aspect of the deliberations of recommendations of the Committee with Applicants.** To avoid embarrassment and the possibility of further action by MQ, **Applicants should not contact Committee members** who are not involved with their application.

Requests for information on any aspect of an application, or on decisions, should be directed to MQ at grants@mqmentalhealth.org.

**Mentors**

At Stage 2, Applicants will be asked to choose an appropriate Mentor to support them during their Fellows Award. Information about this is not needed for the Stage 1 Statement of Intent. However, Stage 1 Applicants are encouraged to begin considering who might be an appropriate Mentor.

The role of the MQ Mentor is to facilitate the Applicant's career development. Mentors must be established independent investigators with strong track records in both research and mentoring. The same person can be named as a Mentor on more than one application.

Applicants should give careful thought to their choice of Mentor. The Mentor is expected to provide guidance during the application process as well as during the proposed research project, and Applicants are encouraged to consider:

- the capacity of their chosen Mentor to provide the necessary level of support.
- that the chosen Mentor's field of research is relevant to the Applicant and/or proposed project (ideally, Mentors should be from a field different to that of the Applicant).
- that there is no restriction on which institution the Mentor is based at, but Applicants are advised to consider carefully the differences in global time zones when making their choice.

Mentors are encouraged to view their support and mentorship of the Applicant as part of a longer-term commitment to help Applicants realise their career aspirations. In the Stage 2 Invited Proposal, Candidates will be required to provide a plan for how this mentorship will be practically realised.

If an award is made, MQ will provide the corresponding Mentor with modest funding (£1,000) to support meetings and travel with the Fellow and other collaborators. Mentors will be invited to participate in the MQ research community and will be asked to provide comment on the annual research report submitted by the Fellow.

Mentors can be from any country worldwide and can be based in any country worldwide. However, Mentors must be eligible to enter the UK for annual meetings.
Key Dates

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<tr>
<td>25th April 2017 (17.00 BST)</td>
<td>Stage 1 application deadline</td>
<td>Statement of Intent application forms are to be submitted via the online system by 17.00, London time</td>
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<td>Late-June 2017</td>
<td>Stage 1 selection &amp; invitation to Stage 2</td>
<td>Applicants will be notified of the Committee’s decisions by the end of June 2017. Successful applicants will be given access to the Stage 2 – Invited Proposal application form on this date.</td>
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The MQ Community and Expectations of Awardees

The MQ Fellows Award provides a unique opportunity to join MQ as we grow. We aim to build networks and support amongst the research community with enthusiastic and committed investigators in all areas of mental health research. In accepting the MQ Fellows Award, Awardees will embrace opportunities to interact with MQ, our advisers and other stakeholders including at the MQ Mental Health Science Meeting, to facilitate our aims to build for the future.

Annual report
Each year, MQ Fellows will be expected to submit a research report together with comments from their Mentors. Budget reports are also required annually.

Mentors
MQ Fellows and their Mentors are expected to meet regularly to discuss the project as appropriate. To foster Fellow/Mentor communications, MQ will provide Mentors with funding of £1,000 to support meetings and travel. Mentors will also be invited to attend and participate in the annual meeting.

Contact us
Please see our website for further details regarding the MQ Fellows Awards and how to apply. Applicants are encouraged to contact MQ if they have any enquiries:

Website: [http://www.mqmentalhealth.org/](http://www.mqmentalhealth.org/)  
Email: grants@mqmentalhealth.org
Appendix 1

MQ & Stanley Center Fellows Award

For the 2017 Fellows Award round, MQ is pleased to have partnered with The Stanley Center for Psychiatric Research at Broad Institute. The Stanley Center focuses on severe mental illness and has recently expanded collection efforts in Africa and other Low and Middle Income Countries (LMIC). This award will support activity targeted towards novel research into mental health issues by offering a Fellows Award to an early-career scientist based in a LMIC focused on neuropsychiatric genetics.

Neuropsychiatric genetics encompasses research into the genetic underpinnings of severe mental illness and neurological disorders and the neurobiological mechanisms that trigger these brain disorders. The priority conditions for the MQ & Stanley Center Fellows Award are schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and neurodevelopmental disorders, though other disorders will also be considered.

The MQ & Stanley Center Fellows Award will be restricted to applicants associated with a host institution in a LMIC preferably fulltime but at least partially – i.e. may have an appointment at another institution as long as a reasonable* amount of time is spent in a LMIC.

There is no requirement for the applicant to be an existing collaborator of Stanley Center, although being from a Stanley Global collaborating country or institution may strengthen the application.

(*reasonable amount is subject to interpretation)