



जैव प्रौद्योगिकी विभाग  
**Department of Biotechnology**  
Ministry of Science & Technology  
Government of India

## UK-India Covid-19 Partnership Initiative

### CALL-SPECIFIC GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

This guidance supplements the standard MRC Guidance for Applicants. Please consult the [standard MRC Guidance for Applicants](#) for information such as preparing the UK budget for your proposal.

It is also important that Indian researchers consult the [Modalities of Participation and Funding for Indian Investigators](#) and all relevant guidance provided by the [Department of Biotechnology \(DBT\)](#).

This call-specific guidance document provides additional information relating to this call. Where guidance in the present document differs from that in the [standard MRC Guidance for Applicants](#), it is important you follow the guidance in this present, scheme specific, document.

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## **1. Important application information**

As Part of UK Research and Innovation ([UKRI](#)), the Medical Research Council ([MRC](#)) and Economic and Social Research Council ([ESRC](#)) are collaborating with the Department of Biotechnology ([DBT](#)), India, to invite proposals to the UK-India Covid-19 Partnership Initiative.

For further information on the background, aim, objectives and scope please see the [Call webpage](#).

Researchers will be responsible for developing their own collaborations and, once a research proposal is developed, UK and Indian applicants must apply jointly for funding. For administrative purposes, all projects will have a Principal Investigator (PI) based at a UK Research Organisation (RO) and a PI based at an Indian RO. Partners must work together to complete one joint application to be written in English and submitted to the MRC via the [MRC Joint electronic System \(Je-S\) System](#).

The total funding available for this call is as follows:

- MRC - up to £4m
- DBT – will provide matched equivalent resource

Research Grants under this call must be up to 18 months in duration and must start on **1<sup>st</sup> May 2021**.

Funding for projects awarded under this call for proposals is jointly provided by the MRC, ESRC and DBT. The size of the grants will vary according to the needs of each research project. UK and Indian applicants do not need to request equal amounts from both sides. The difference in values should reflect the difference in costs covered and local prices. The agencies also expect the costs on each side to accurately reflect the research effort to be carried out. It is expected, however, that the research effort on both sides is comparable.

UK based applicants may request up to a maximum of £1million per project (with smaller requests also encouraged); with the equivalent, in terms of research effort, from DBT for the Indian component.

## Key dates

Activity	Date
Deadline for the Intention to Submit	11 <sup>th</sup> November 2020 (UK deadline 23:00 GMT)
Deadline for investigators to submit full proposal on UK Je-S system	16.00 GMT on 1 <sup>st</sup> December 2020
Deadline for investigators to submit PDF to DBT	16.00 IST on 3 <sup>rd</sup> December 2020
External peer review	November 2020 to January 2021
Panel meeting	February 2021
Applicants notified of funding decision	February 2021
Projects start	1 <sup>st</sup> May 2021

## 2. Who can apply?

For support under this call, applicants and organisations must be eligible to apply for funding from their respective country's funding agency/agencies.

### 2.1 Types of research organisations (ROs)

For the MRC/ESRC participants, standard UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) eligibility criteria as described on the [UKRI website](#) will apply. Applications cannot be accepted from UK principal investigators in commercial organisations. **See [section 1 of the standard MRC Guidance for Applicants](#) for further details about eligible UK institutions. This call will follow standard MRC eligibility criteria.**

For the Indian participants please consult the [Modalities of Participation and Funding for Indian Investigator\(s\)](#).

The funders are not seeking to support applicants/partners outside of the UK and India through this initiative. Please contact [international@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:international@mrc.ukri.org) if you are considering involving applicants/partners from a third country in your proposal.

### 2.2 People named on the grant

#### **The UK and Indian Principal Investigators**

The proposal should be jointly developed by a UK PI and an Indian PI, who will develop a common research plan and vision. The joint PIs are responsible for the intellectual leadership of the research project, and for the overall management of the research. The PIs will be the funding agencies' main contacts for the proposal.



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PIs may only submit one application to this scheme as PI but may be involved in more applications if listed as a Co-Investigator.

The award of a UKRI-DBT Grant does not guarantee any further commitment to funding by the MRC, ESRC or DBT.

#### **UK:**

- The MRC/ESRC will consider proposals from any UK-based researcher who is based at an eligible research organisation and can demonstrate that they will direct the proposed research and be actively engaged in carrying it through. See standard [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#) for further details about UK PI eligibility.

#### **India:**

- For the India-based participants, eligibility criteria have been explicitly described within [Modalities of Participation and Funding for Indian Investigator\(s\)](#).

#### **Co-investigators (Co-Is)**

A PI may be supported by a number of Co-Is named on the application. A Co-I assists the PI in the management and leadership of the research project. They provide intellectual and/or practical input into the research and their participation may warrant inclusion of their name on any outputs (e.g. publications).

#### **Other support**

For information on other parties involved in research including project partners, please see section 1 in the standard [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#).

**If a UK project partner is from industry or if Indian investigators (or project partners) are from industry, then applicants must follow the [guidance](#) relating to the MRC Industrial Collaboration Agreement (MICA).**

### **3. Application process**

#### **3.1 Intention to Submit (ItS)**

UK/India based researchers planning to submit to this scheme should submit a short [Intention to Submit \(ItS\)](#) by 23:00 GMT on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

The PI cannot change between the ItS and the full application, but additional participants can be added/removed at the full application stage.



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Please note, this step does not form part of the review process. MRC, ESRC and DBT will not undertake eligibility checks at this point. Applicants should not await a response from the funders following the ItS submission, but simply continue with the development of the full proposal to be submitted by the deadline. The MRC, ESRC and DBT will use the ItS to help prepare for the review process.

### 3.2 Full application: process overview

#### Both of the following must be submitted:

- A Full Application jointly prepared by the UK and Indian researchers on the UK Joint electronic Submission (Je-S) System by 16:00 GMT on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020.
- Indian applicants must submit a PDF of the Je-S application to DBT by 16:00 IST 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020. The single consolidated **PDF file**, provided by the UK PI must be sent via email to [icone@dbt.nic.in](mailto:icone@dbt.nic.in) with a subject line **“UK-India Covid-19 Partnership Initiative || Title of the Project”**.

Applications submitted to only one side/funding agency will not be accepted. Failure to submit a valid application to the MRC and DBT by the deadline will invalidate both submissions. Further guidance can be found in the standard [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#) as well as in this present call-specific Guidance for Applicants document. Investigators from India are required to ensure due compliance of all eligibility conditions as described in [“Modalities of Participation and Funding for Indian Investigator\(s\)”](#).

The MRC, ESRC and DBT will conduct a remit check/relevance review to identify applications that are in alignment with the scope of the call. Applications that are deemed not to be eligible or not to be relevant to the call may be withdrawn from the competition at any point during the peer review process.

UK and Indian researchers should discuss ethics and Intellectual Property before fully developing their proposal.

### 3.3 Full application: summary of components

The following documents must be included in the jointly-prepared full application submission on Je-S:

- **A completed Je-S form.**
  - All UK and Indian PIs/Co-Is **MUST** be included.
  - The costing part of the online Je-S form must reflect the UK costs, so while the Indian investigators should be included, hours charged on the Je-S form for Indian investigators should be 0. Indian costs will instead be captured in the [DBT Template for Administrative & Financial Considerations](#).



- **A cover letter (optional).** If you have submitted a similar or related proposal to any of the UK Research Councils in the last year, please provide details in a cover letter including what has changed since the previous submission. The covering letter can be used to cover details such as conflicts of interest and names of conflicted experts that you request not to be used as peer reviewers by the MRC/ESRC/DBT.
- **A jointly prepared Case for Support**, including a one-page methodology and experimental design annex (optional but recommended) – please see [section 3.4](#) of this document.
- **CVs and publication lists** (uploaded individually) for each of the UK and Indian Investigators and named research staff on the application.
- **Justification of Resources** (using the call-specific [JoR template](#)) – please see [section 3.4](#).
- **DBT Template for Administrative & Financial Considerations** (Using the Call specific [template](#)). This document should be uploaded as a 'Non-UK Component'.
- **Data Management Plan** – please see section [2.2.7](#) of the standard [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#).
- **MRC Industry Collaboration Agreement (MICA) form and Heads of Terms (if required)** – This is needed if industry is involved in the UK and/or in India. Please see the [relevant MRC webpage](#) for further guidance.
- **UK National Health Service (NHS) costs (if required)** – please see section 3.5 of the standard [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#).
- **Use of animals overseas form(s) (if required)** please see section 4.4.6 of the standard [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#) and the [use of animals overseas section](#) of the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement & Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) website. This attachment should be uploaded as a 'Letter of Support'.
- **Letters of support (dated and signed):**
  - from the UK Research Organisation(s) demonstrating support for the proposed research project.
  - from the Indian research organisation(s) demonstrating support for the proposed research project.
  - from any project partner where an in-kind payment is being contributed.
  - A **human participation/human tissue letter** (if applicable, 2 sides of A4 max) - see [section 5.5.1](#) of this Guide for Applicants for further information.
  - **Use of Animals letter** (if applicable, 2 sides of A4 max) – see [section 5.6.1](#) of this Guide for Applicants for information.

All attachments should be completed in 11-point Arial typeface, with a minimum of 2cm margins. Applications will not be accepted where smaller or narrow typefaces have been used.

**Page lengths (A4 size):**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Maximum length (Maximum)</b>
Covering letter	2 pages
A jointly prepared Case for Support	8 pages (including illustration, references and a project Gantt Chart) + optional additional 1 page for methodology annex

CV	2 pages per CV
List of Publications	1 page per List of Publications
<a href="#">Justification of Resources</a>	Please refer to the call-specific template for information about page limits
<a href="#">DBT Template for Administrative &amp; Financial Considerations</a>	Please refer to the call-specific template for information about page limits
Data Management Plan	3 pages
Letter of supports (dated and signed)	2 pages each

Further guidance and details for all of the above content can be found in the standard [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#) and in this present call-specific Guidance for Applicants.

### 3.4 The Case for Support and Justification of Resources

#### **The Case for Support**

A jointly prepared Case for Support must be uploaded as a PDF to the Je-S application. The case for support may be up to 8 A4 pages in length (including illustrations, references and a project **Gantt chart**) plus an optional additional one-page methodology annex.

In your case for support you should address each of the following headings

- Title
- Importance of the research
  - *This section should include a:*
    - *description and justification of the importance of the COVID-19 related knowledge gap and/or need that is being targeted;*
    - *a description of how this research adds value to existing Covid19-related activities;*
    - *In addition, please define the project's deliverables and expected outcomes at the 3, 6, 12 and 18 month milestones. This should include an explanation of how deliverables will provide/lead to benefit(s) relating to the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak (max 300 words). N.B this information will be made public if the proposal is funded.*
- Scientific potential
  - People and track record
  - Research environment
  - Research plans and deliverables
- Ethics and research governance
- Exploitation and dissemination
- Project Partners

Generic Guidance on content under each of these headings can be found [in section 2.2.3 of MRC's standard Guidance for Applicants](#) document.





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Details of key issues included in the Collaboration Agreement, for example management of Intellectual property, should be detailed in the 'consideration of ethical, governance and Intellectual Property issues around the project' section of the Case for Support.

A one-page annex may be included in addition to the case for support page limit providing additional detail of the methodology and experimental design aspects of the proposal. This information must be provided as a clearly marked annex at the end of the main Case for Support entitled '**Methodology and experimental design annex**'. Please note that you are not required to duplicate information presented elsewhere in the application.

**The use of this annex is strongly advised** where the proposal includes the use of animals and/or human participants, or where the methodology/experimental design proposed is practically novel. Please see sections [2.2.3.6](#) and [4.3](#) of the standard MRC Guidance for Applicants.

### **Justification of Resources (JoR)**

Please complete the call-specific [JoR template](#) available on the call webpage, justifying that both the UK and Indian costs requested are appropriate to undertake the research project. The call-specific template includes details of the page limits and must be uploaded to Je-S. The JoR must contain a breakdown and explanation of the costs requested for this funding scheme by each partner taking into account the requirements outlined under the 'Funding available' section of this document.

The JoR should explain why the resources requested are appropriate for the research proposed, taking into account the nature and complexity of the research proposal as well as how the resources facilitate the scientific impact. It should not be simply a list of the resources required.

In addition to the standard content for the Justification of Resources, applicants should include:

- the UK value of resources requested by the UK researchers.
- the UK value of resources requested by the Indian partner.

This is so that the value of the total funds requested for the research project can be assessed.

**The costs on both the UK and Indian side should be separate with a clear justification of each cost.**

### **3.5 Creating a Je-S account and application**

To submit full proposals, please login to your Je-S account via <https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk>, using the username and password you have chosen (if you do not have a Je-S account, or have forgotten your password, please see the guidance provided further below).



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Please note that **ONLY** the UK Principal Investigator creates the Je-S application, any collaborating investigators from other research organisation (UK or Overseas) are added to the application depending on their involvement and responsibilities whilst working on the project.

New Je-S users: In order to gain access to the Je-S System, [create an account](#).

*Important information when creating a Je-S account:*

- **All Investigators (from the UK, India and any third country) involved in a grant project will need to be registered on Je-S. It is important to register on Je-S at least two weeks before the deadline as the process takes time to complete.**
- It is recommended that overseas Co-Investigators should ensure that their Research Organisation (RO) has been added to the Je-S database before they commence the Je-S account creation process.
- The create account process will require the applicant to accept the terms and conditions using the Je-S System, before the applicant can proceed with the account creation.
- Applicants can choose to 'Skip the ORCID identifier' as this is NOT required for the purposes of being added to the proposal as an 'Investigator', priority is to create a verified Je-S account to enable the Investigator to be included within the Je-S application.
- Investigators should select the account type 'Applicant on a Standard or Outline Proposal' (within the Research Proposals section).

Should the overseas Co-Investigators not be able to select their RO when attempting to create their Je-S account, MRC recommend that the Investigator emails the [Je-S Helpdesk JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org](mailto:JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org), with the full name and address details of the Overseas Organisation and they will contact you with further instructions.

#### **Creating your Je-S application:**

- Select '**Documents**' from left hand menu list from your Je-S account home page
- Select '**New Document**' from within the Functions/create section of your documents page

Please enter the '**Call/type/mode**' as listed below and note the can only be selected when the call opening date has been reached.

**Je-S Add New Document**

To find the council, document type and scheme combination for a particular call please use the call search.

**Call Search** (opens in a new window)

Select Council:  
MRC

Select Document Type:  
Standard Proposal

Select Scheme:  
Research Grant

Select Call/Type/Mode (optional):  
UK-India Covid-19 Partnership Initiative Nov 2020

Copy existing document?

Create Document Cancel

Please telephone Je-S Helpdesk +44 (0)793 444164 should you require any assistance with the Je-S system.

### Downloading your Proposal PDF

To download your completed proposal submission please follow the below steps.

1. Selects Documents from the left hand menu list.
2. Select Standard Proposal documents option.
3. Select the Check Box to reveal proposals submitted to Council, then Open the submitted proposals.
4. Finally select as per screen shot below, Document Actions, Print Document then Download the PDF version including attachments. A 'Save' option should pop up at the bottom of the web page.



Economic and Social Research Council

Medical Research Council



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The screenshot shows the MRC Research Council portal interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'Home: Documents: Document List'. A dropdown menu is open, showing options like 'Document Actions', 'Preview Document', 'Print Document', 'Export Document as XML', 'Administer User Access', 'Display Document History', and 'Show Submission Path'. Red arrows point to the 'Print Document' option in the dropdown and to a 'Print Document' button in the top right. Below the dropdown, there are sections for 'Document Menu (Hide)' and 'Home: Documents: Document List: With Council (ready)'. The 'Document Menu (Hide)' section lists various document components like Instructions, Project Details, Investigators, etc., with icons indicating their status. The 'Home: Documents: Document List: With Council (ready)' section shows project details such as Scheme (Research Grant), Project Title (Self-harm rates, clinical contact and linked health data), and Organisation (The University of Manchester). A note at the bottom states: 'The stored PDF version of your document was created and may not include any edits made since then. Download the PDF version including attachments'.

### 3.6 Budgets

In total, up to approximately ~£8m will be made available through this initiative: up to £4m from MRC/ESRC in support of the UK components; with matched equivalent resource provided by DBT in support of the Indian components.

UK based applicants may request up to a maximum of £1million per project (with smaller requests also encouraged); with the equivalent, in terms of research effort, from DBT for the Indian component.

Projects must be 18 months in duration and must start on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2021.

MRC and ESRC will fund the UK component of the proposal at the standard 80% of the full Economic Cost (fEC), and DBT will fund the Indian component of the proposal. The UK element of funding will not cover UK PhD studentships or requests for capital items. **Please see section 3. Resources – Full Economic Costing in the standard [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#)** for information on fEC.

The size of the grants will vary according to the needs of each research project. UK and Indian applicants do not need to request equal amounts from both sides. The difference in values should reflect the difference in costs covered and local prices. The agencies also expect the costs on each side to accurately reflect the research effort to be carried out. It is expected, however, that the research effort on both sides is comparable.

It is the responsibility of the Indian PI and UK PI to ensure the conditions of their respective funder are understood.

**All the UK and Indian investigators must be inputted onto the UK Je-S form.** However, any costs for Indian investigators must be inputted with the correct hours but with those hours charged as £0. The Indian partner costs will be recorded in the Justification of Resources (call-specific [JoR template](#)) and the DBT [Template for Administrative & Financial Considerations](#) which can be downloaded from the MRC webpage for this call.

***UK funding available***

	<b><i>UK (MRC/ESRC) funding</i></b>
Research costs:	
Staff – directly incurred post (e.g. Researchers, Technicians)	Yes
Staff – directly allocated posts (PI and Co-I time)	Yes
Equipment below £10,000: Costs should be claimed as 'Other Directly Incurred Costs'	Yes
Equipment above £10,000	No
Other Directly Incurred Costs Including (e.g. Consumables, Sub-Contracting costs)	Yes
Research studentships	No
Research assistants/postdoctoral researchers/research technicians	Yes
Travel and subsistence for exchange/mobility activities	Yes
Cost of workshops, meetings etc. should be costed as 'Other Directly Incurred'.	Yes

***UK equipment:***

**Capital costs above £10,000 cannot be funded via the MRC/ESRC as part of this call and therefore any capital costs requested will not be accepted by the UK funders.**

Costs for 'small equipment' under £10,000 (such as consumables) are accepted by MRC/ESRC from UK applicants. These should be listed within the 'Other Directly Incurred Costs' section on Je-S.

**UK spending obligations**

**UK:** Due to the tight time scales of this call, successful UK research organisations will need to adhere to strict spending requirements. For this call, the end date of the proposed research should be **no later than 31st October 2022**. If you have any questions about the payment profiles, please contact [international@mc.ukri.org](mailto:international@mc.ukri.org)



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## **4. Assessment process and criteria**

Funding decisions will be made through a joint process between MRC, ESRC and DBT. To be funded, proposals must be internationally competitive and at a standard equivalent to that normally expected supported by each funding organisation.

Proposals will be reviewed firstly by external experts/peer reviewers, chosen based on the subject matter of the proposal. The reviewers will be selected by the UK and Indian funders, and they will provide written reviews and scores. Information on the scoring system is included in [Annex 1](#). The MRC will organise joint peer review on behalf of the all the funders (DBT, MRC and ESRC). Peer review will be based on the jointly prepared proposal submitted on the UKRI Je-S system.

These reviews will then inform an Expert Panel jointly selected by UKRI and DBT, who will make funding recommendations. Panel Members will be asked to give the proposal an overall score from 1-10 utilising the reviews and the key assessment criteria below. Further information on the scoring system is included in [Annex 2](#).

Please note, applicants will not have an opportunity to respond to reviewer comments through this initiative.

Key assessment criteria for the submissions will include:

- The potential for the proposal to have an impact within the period of the award and to provide a unique value-adding contribution relative to existing activity.
- Access to required resources
- Applicant expertise and experience
- Partnership: including strength and clarity of collaborations and opportunities provided
- Design and feasibility of project plan
- Value for money (for UK and India)
- Alignment with WHO-Roadmap priorities

The decisions of the Panel will not be open to appeal and the funders reserve the right to amend the review process.

For further information on the peer review process, please see the [MRC peer review](#) page.



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## **5. Agreements and ethics**

Investigators from India are required to ensure due compliance of all eligibility conditions as described in [“Modalities of Participation and Funding for Indian Investigator\(s\)”](#).

### **5.1 Collaboration Agreement**

As the research projects will be carried out by multiple research organisations and project partners, the basis of collaboration between the organisations and project partners, including ownership of intellectual property (IP) generated during the project and rights to exploitation, and costs of IP management [this is not an eligible cost to MRC UKRI], is expected to be set out in a formal Collaboration Agreement between the research organisations involved. It is the responsibility of the research organisations to put such an agreement in place within three months of the start of the UK component of the project. **The terms of collaboration shall not conflict with MRC/UKRI and DBT terms and conditions.**

The collaboration agreement should also include the allocation of resources throughout the project.

Arrangements for collaboration and/or exploitation must not prevent the future progression of academic research and the dissemination of research results in accordance with academic custom and practise and the requirements of the funding bodies.

Details of key issues included in the Collaboration Agreement, for example management of Intellectual property, should be detailed in the ‘consideration of ethical, governance and Intellectual Property issues around the project’ section of the Case for Support.

### **5.2 Intellectual Property**

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) means any copyright and related rights, patents, rights to inventions, registered designs, database rights, design rights, topography rights, trademarks, service marks, trade names and domain names, trade secrets, rights in unpatented know-how, rights of confidence and any other intellectual or industrial property rights of any nature including all applications (or rights to apply) for, and renewals or extensions of such rights and all similar or equivalent rights or forms of protection which subsist or will subsist now or in the future in any part of the world.

Ownership of intellectual property (IP) generated during the project and rights to exploitation, as well as any costs regarding management of IP, are expected to be agreed between the collaborating research organisations before the research begins. It is up to the respective UK and Indian research teams to determine in advance how any exploited IP will be divided amongst the partners. Details of this agreement must be included in the Collaboration Agreement (as above).



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Agreements must not conflict with MRC, ESRC or DBT policies or terms and conditions. Any agreements in place between a research organisation and their respective funding organisation must be adhered to, including the sharing of IP costs or benefits. Any IP sharing agreements in place between a research organisation and their national funding body would be expected to apply only to the IP share of that research organisation.

The MRC will follow its standard rules/terms and conditions regarding IP, please see relevant sections of the UKRI and MRC terms and conditions for research grants at <https://mrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-mrc-award-holders/information-for-award-holders> and the DBT funding guidelines.

### 5.3 Material Transfer Agreements

Collection and exchange of material may occur between collaborating institutions, as necessary, in strict compliance with the legislation in effect in both countries.

### 5.4 Ethics

Any research involving humans/human tissue and/or animals (whether undertaken in the UK or India) must comply with legislation in both the UK and India. It must also comply with relevant policies and guidance of MRC, ESRC and DBT.

It is the absolute responsibility of the PI and the ROs to ensure that appropriate ethical approval is granted and adhered to, and that no research requiring ethical approval is initiated until it has been granted.

The ethical information sub-sections in the Je-S proposal form should be completed to give details of any human participation, research using animals, genetic and biological risk **in all countries** (stating clearly which country/countries the relevant research will be done in), and should state any UK and Indian ethical committee approvals required. Section 5 of the standard [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#) has recently been updated to reflect amendments to this section of the Je-S form.

Applicants must be clear in their applications in which country the proposed research involving humans and/or animals will take place and must fully complete the ethical information section for research taking place in either country.

Indian PIs of the consortium should apply to their institutional review boards (IRBs)/ institutional ethics committees (IECs) at the time of submission of proposal to obtain necessary ethics approvals from all involved institutions. If an application is successful, these approvals must be submitted in a stipulated time to accomplish required administrative diligence. Further guidance can be found within the [Modalities of Participation and Funding for Indian Investigator\(s\)](#).





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## MRC ethics guidance

Applicants must comply with all of the MRC's relevant policies and guidance regarding the use of humans/human tissue and/or animals in research, further details are given below.

Approval(s) for the research detailed in an MRC grant proposal must be granted by the appropriate bodies before any work can commence. Institutions, applicants and grant holders have absolute responsibility for ensuring that the necessary approvals are granted for the research considered by the MRC, ESRC and DBT.

The PI/RO must be prepared to furnish the MRC with a copy of the ethical approval, and any correspondence with the committees, if requested by the UK council. The UK PI must notify the MRC if a regulator or a research ethics committee requires amendments that substantially affect the research question, methodology or costs to the extent that the project is no longer the same as that approved for funding by the MRC.

### 5.5 Use of humans/human tissue

#### 5.5.1 MRC guidance

A signed and dated letter of support must be attached to the proposals when human/human tissue research is proposed (in either country). The letter should be titled 'Human participation/human tissue letter' and **MUST be signed by both the UK and Indian PI**. It must be clear from the letter which human/tissue research is being proposed in which country.

The letter should state that all applicants will comply with the relevant MRC policies and guidance in the standard [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#) and call-specific Guidance for Applicants. The letter should also acknowledge that the UK and Indian PI understand that MRC's current policy for research involving humans to take place overseas, is that **for research to be undertaken internationally, both local and UK ethical approval is required**. The letter should also state that the UK and Indian PI understand that for clinical studies involving human participants and/or patients in the UK or overseas, appropriate consent must be obtained.

In addition, where the Indian partner or another third party (ANY organisation other than the UK RO) is responsible for recruitment of people as research participants and/or providing human tissue, details should be included in the case for support and the 'Human participation/human tissue letter' MUST include confirmation of the following:

- which international partner is involved and that the partner has agreed to recruit the participants/provide tissue
- that what is being supplied is suitable for the research being undertaken
- that the quantity of tissue (where relevant) being supplied is suitable, but not excessive for achieving meaningful results.



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The letter of support must be an integral part of the application (as an attachment) and must focus on the proposal it accompanies.

## 5.6 Use of animals

### **5.6.1 MRC guidance**

Applicants must ensure that all of the proposed research, both that in the UK and in India will comply with the principles of the MRC common guidance on [responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research](#) and [NC3Rs Guidelines: Primate Accommodation, Care and Use](#).

In particular, UK institutions should be aware of the following aspect of the guidance relating to research or collaboration outside the UK:

*“When collaborating with other laboratories, or where animal facilities are provided by third parties, researchers and the local ethics committee in the UK should satisfy themselves that welfare standards consistent with the principles of UK legislation (e.g. the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986), and set out in this guidance, are applied and maintained.*

*Where there are significant deviations, prior approval from the funding body should be sought and agreed. International research should also be compliant with all relevant national and local regulatory systems in the host country where the research is to be conducted.”*

Investigators proposing the use of animals (in either country) should read the guidance and:

- provide a signed and dated letter with the heading ‘Use of Animals letter’ (uploaded as a Letter of Support to the Je-S application) which MUST be signed by both the UK and Indian PI stating that:
  - all animal research (undertaken in either country) will adhere to all relevant national and local regulatory systems in the UK and India
  - they will follow the guidelines laid out in the [responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research](#) document and ensure that work is carried out to UK and Indian standards. If primates are used they should also confirm that they will follow the [NC3Rs Guidelines: Primate Accommodation, Care and Use](#)
  - before initiation of the proposed research work, appropriate approvals from institutional and/or central animal ethics committees will be obtained for experimental protocols to be adopted in their projects. Successful proposals may be expected to provide copies of these permissions before funding is released.
  - details on which animal research will take place in which country (UK, India or elsewhere) and through which funder the resources are being sought.



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Applicants should include confirmation that animal welfare standards at these institutions meet the requirements outlined above.

- If applicable, applicants should also submit the MRC 'Use of Animals Overseas' form(s) - please see section 4.4.6 of the standard [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#) and [the use of animals overseas section](#) of the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement & Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) website. This attachment should be uploaded as a 'Letter of Support'.

All applicants are required to comply with Section 4: 'Proposals involving animal use' of the standard [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#). Applicants should detail in the letter any additional information which was not included in the proposal document but which is pertinent to the animal research proposed and which the funders should be aware of.

In addition, researchers should be reminded that sufficient information and justification regarding any animal research proposed, regardless of country, must be provided in the proposal order to allow full peer review to take place.

## **6. Terms and conditions**

For the UK grant's terms and conditions please follow the link:

<https://www.ukri.org/funding/information-for-award-holders/grant-terms-and-conditions/>

### **UK grant starting procedures**

The UK side of the grant must start on **1<sup>st</sup> May 2021**. The start of the grant may NOT be delayed beyond this date.

UK applicants should refer to the standard [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#) for information on what the starting procedure entails. Please inform the relevant support staff in your organisation of this requirement to ensure the project starts on time.

Please note that due to the requirement to start by 1<sup>st</sup> May 2021, the normal three months start period rules outlined in the UKRI Terms and Conditions RGC5, does not apply to this project.

### **Ethical requirements**

It is the responsibility of the principal investigator and the research organisation to ensure that appropriate ethical approval is granted for this study and adhered to, and that no research requiring ethical approval is initiated until it has been granted.

MRC's [current policy for research involving humans](#) is that for research to be undertaken overseas, both local and UK ethical approval is required.

For clinical studies involving human participants and/or patients, appropriate consent must be obtained.



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For grants that include the use of animals, the [responsibility in the use of animals](#) guidance should be adhered to, and in particular: 'When collaborating with other laboratories, or where animal facilities are provided by third parties, researchers and the local ethics committee in the UK should satisfy themselves that welfare standards consistent with the principals of UK legislation (such as the ASPA) and set out in this guidance are applied and maintained.'

The principal investigator/research organisation must be prepared to furnish the Medical Research Council with a copy of the ethical approval, and any correspondence with the committees, if requested. The principal investigator must notify the Medical Research Council if a regulator or a research ethics committee requires amendments that substantially affect the research question, methodology or costs to the extent that the project is no longer the same as that approved for funding.

The grants must comply with the ethical sections within this call-specific Guide for Applicants and within the standard [MRC Guidance for Applicants](#).

### **UK government support**

This award is dependent on continuing government commitment for this initiative and continuing match from the partner funder. In the event that this support is withdrawn, the MRC and ESRC reserve the right to terminate the award.

### **UK requests for extensions to awards**

Due to financial restraints of the Fund for International Collaboration, grant extensions will only be considered under exceptional circumstances (in line with the Equality Act 2010) and will require MRC (and if applicable ESRC) agreement on a case-by-case basis. The Research Organisation remains responsible for compliance with the terms of the Equality Act 2010 including any subsequent amendments introduced while work is in progress; and for ensuring that the expectations set out in the Medical Research Councils' statement of expectations for equality and diversity are met.

## **7. Contacts and Guidance**

Please read:

- the [call text](#)
- the current document, the call-specific Guidance for Applicants
- the [standard MRC Guidance for Applicants](#)
- The [DBT Modalities of Participation and Funding for Indian Investigator\(s\)](#)
- [DBT Template for Administrative & Financial Considerations](#).

For further information, UK (MRC and ESRC) applicants should contact: [international@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:international@mrc.ukri.org) and Indian applicants should contact: Dr. Ketan Thorat, Scientist-'C' [icone@dbt.nic.in](mailto:icone@dbt.nic.in)

## **8. Additional Information**

### **8.1 DHSC prioritisation of COVID-19 research studies**

Any research that requires access to the UK health and care system must follow guidance issued by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) to get their study nationally supported as high priority COVID-19 Urgent Public Health Research. [See the NIHR guidance.](#)

This will include research that would normally need NHS R&D approval, including where access to patients, data or health and care staff would be required.

Given the urgency of the current situation UKRI are committed to a principle of parallel processing. We encourage requests to UKRI to be submitted in parallel to requests for access to the UK health and care system through the NIHR portal. However, we are aware that you may need evidence of the approval of funding before the NIHR makes their decision on access. We will therefore endeavour to make decisions as quickly as possible.

If approval is received through NIHR and a study is nationally recognised, evidence of this must be provided to UKRI.

### **8.2 Data and software sharing and open access requirements**

Data produced as a result of this funding will need to be shared in line with the [Joint statement on sharing research data and findings relevant to the novel coronavirus \(nCoV\) outbreak](#), to which UKRI is a signatory.

Software, such as analysis scripts, spreadsheets, or modelling codes, created as part of the work under this funding should be similarly shared.

Examples of suitable data depositories include:

#### [Covid-19 Data Portal](#)

The COVID-19 Data Portal was launched in April 2020 to bring together relevant datasets for sharing and analysis in an effort to accelerate coronavirus research. It enables researchers to upload, access and analyse COVID-19 related reference data and specialist datasets as part of the wider European COVID-19 Data Platform.

#### [Health data gateway](#)

The Health Data Research Innovation Gateway is a portal to find and request access to UK health datasets controlled by members of the UK Health Data Research Alliance. Launched in January 2020, the first phase of the Gateway provides detailed descriptions (metadata) of these datasets, which researchers can search, browse and request access to health data. It does not hold or store any patient or health data. It aims to increase transparency around accessible datasets and processes associated with their access.



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[UK Data Service](#)

[OpenAIRE](#)

Software, analysis scripts and modelling codes should be made available through a version control service such as Github or Gitlab.

## **Annex 1: External peer review scoring system**

Proposals will be evaluated and rated overall on a scale ranging between 1 and 6 by scientific reviewers who will utilise the following score indicators.

Categories 1-2 are not worthy of funding.

Categories 3-6 are worthy of funding, subject to the availability of resources.

<b>Score Indicators</b>	<b>Score</b>
<p><b>Exceptional - Top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance</b></p> <p>Scientific quality and impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance</li> <li>- Original and innovative; novel methodology and design</li> <li>- Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact</li> </ul> <p>Scientific leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Excellent leadership (<i>track record, team, environment, and collaborators</i>)</li> </ul> <p>Justification of resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential for high return on investment (<i>resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation</i>)</li> <li>- Appropriate staff time allocated to deliver project (<i>Principal investigators and co-investigators</i>)</li> </ul> <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ethical and/ or governance issues are fully considered</li> </ul>	<b>6</b>
<p><b>Excellent - Internationally competitive and leading edge nationally, or of national strategic importance</b></p> <p>Scientific quality and impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance</li> <li>- Original and innovative; novel methodology and design</li> <li>- Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact</li> </ul> <p>Scientific leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Excellent leadership (<i>track record, team, environment, and collaborators</i>)</li> </ul> <p>Justification of resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential for high return on investment (<i>resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation</i>)</li> <li>- Appropriate staff time allocated to deliver project (<i>Principal investigators and co-investigators</i>)</li> </ul> <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ethical and/ or governance issues are fully considered</li> </ul>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>Very High Quality - Internationally competitive in parts</b></p> <p>Scientific quality and impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance</li> <li>- Robust methodology and design (<i>innovative in parts</i>)</li> <li>- Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact</li> </ul> <p>Scientific leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Excellent leadership (<i>track record, team, environment, and collaborators</i>)</li> </ul> <p>Justification of resources</p>	<b>4</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential for significant return on investment</li> <li>- Appropriate staff time allocated to deliver project (<i>Principal investigators and co-investigators</i>)</li> </ul> <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ethical and/ or governance issues are fully considered</li> </ul>	
<p><b>High Quality</b></p> <p>Scientific quality and impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Worthwhile scientific question or knowledge gap or a valuable scientific resource</li> <li>- Methodologically sound study</li> <li>- Potential for significant health and/or socioeconomic impact</li> </ul> <p>Scientific leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong leadership (<i>track record, team, environment, and collaborators</i>)</li> </ul> <p>Justification of resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential for significant return on investment (<i>resources requested, likelihood of projected delivery, anticipated knowledge generation</i>)</li> <li>- Appropriate staff time allocated to deliver project (<i>may be scope strengthen management of the project</i>)</li> </ul> <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ethical and/ or governance issues are well considered</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>
<p><b>Good Quality</b></p> <p>Scientific quality and impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Worthwhile scientific question with potentially useful outcomes</li> <li>- Methodologically sound study but areas require revision</li> <li>- Likelihood of successful delivery</li> </ul> <p>Scientific leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appropriate leadership (<i>scope to strengthen team; environment; collaborators</i>)</li> </ul> <p>Justification of resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potentially more limited return on investment (<i>resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, and anticipated knowledge generation</i>)</li> <li>- Resources broadly appropriate to deliver the proposal</li> </ul> <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ethical and/or governance issues are adequately considered</li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>Poor Quality</b></p> <p>Scientific quality and impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poorly defined question</li> <li>- Methodologically weak study</li> <li>- Limited likelihood of new knowledge generation</li> </ul> <p>Scientific potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poor leadership</li> </ul> <p>Justification of resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potentially poor return on investment</li> </ul> <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ethical and/ or governance issues are not adequately considered</li> </ul>	<b>1</b>



## Annex 2: Panel Scoring System

Proposals will be evaluated and rated overall on a scale ranging between 1 and 10 by panel members who will utilise the criteria and category descriptors in the table below:

Proposals scoring 1-5 are not worthy of funding.

Proposals scoring 6-10 are worthy of funding, subject to the availability of resources.

Score	Indicators
<b>Fundable</b>	
10	<p><b>Exceptional</b> – Top international programme or of exceptional national strategic importance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Quality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Highly original and innovative</li> <li>○ Novel methodology and design</li> <li>○ Excellent leadership (<i>team, environment, and collaborators are amongst the best in a broad field</i>)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Impact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap</li> <li>○ Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact</li> <li>○ Internationally unique resource of value to many disciplines</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Productivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Potential for high return on investment</li> <li>○ Very high likelihood of successful delivery (risks well managed)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
9	<p><b>Excellent</b> - Internationally competitive and leading edge in most areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Quality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Original and innovative</li> <li>○ Novel methodology and design</li> <li>○ Excellent leadership (<i>team, environment, and collaborators e.g. among the best in a specialist area</i>)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Impact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap</li> <li>○ Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact</li> <li>○ Internationally significant resource of value to many disciplines</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Productivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Potential for high return on investment</li> <li>○ Very high likelihood of successful delivery (risks well managed))</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
8	<p><b>Very High Quality</b> - Internationally competitive and leading edge nationally</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Quality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Original and innovative</li> <li>○ Robust methodology and design (<i>innovative in parts</i>)</li> <li>○ Excellent leadership (<i>team, environment, and collaborators</i>)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Impact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance to the UK</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact</li> <li>○ Resource of value to many disciplines</li> <li>● <b>Productivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Potential for significant return on investment</li> <li>○ Very high likelihood of successful delivery (risks well managed)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
7	<p><b>High Quality</b> - Leading edge nationally and internationally competitive in parts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Quality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Innovative</li> <li>○ Robust methodology and design (<i>innovative in parts</i>)</li> <li>○ Strong leadership (<i>team, environment, and collaborators</i>)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Impact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Key scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance to the UK</li> <li>○ Potential for significant health and/or socioeconomic impact</li> <li>○ Valuable scientific resource</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Productivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Potential for significant return on investment</li> <li>○ High likelihood of successful delivery</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
6	<p><b>High Quality</b> –Leading edge nationally, but not yet internationally competitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Quality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Methodologically robust study</li> <li>○ Appropriate leadership (<i>team; environment; collaborators</i>)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Impact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Worthwhile scientific question or knowledge gap</li> <li>○ Justifiable scientific resource</li> <li>○ Potential for reasonable health and/or socioeconomic impact</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Productivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Resources appropriate to deliver the proposal</li> <li>○ High likelihood of successful delivery</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Non-Fundable</b>	
5	<p><b>Good Quality</b> - Nationally competitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Quality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Methodologically sound study but areas require significant revision</li> <li>○ Leadership not optimal (scope to strengthen team; environment; collaborators)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Impact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Worthwhile scientific question with potentially useful outcomes</li> <li>○ Moderate likelihood of contributing to new knowledge generation</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Productivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Resources broadly appropriate to deliver the proposal</li> <li>○ Good likelihood of successful delivery</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

4	<p><b>Potentially Useful - With significant weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Quality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Methodologically weak study (approach or study design requires significant revision)</li> <li>○ Leadership/environment not optimal</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Impact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Contains potentially useful ideas but requires major revision</li> <li>○ Moderate likelihood of successful delivery</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Productivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Resources inappropriate to deliver the proposal</li> <li>○ Unlikely to significantly contribute to new knowledge generation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3	<p><b>Potentially Useful - With major weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Quality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Question poorly defined</li> <li>○ Methodologically weak study</li> <li>○ Poor leadership/environment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Productivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Unlikely to contribute to new knowledge generation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Poor quality science, bordering on unacceptable.</b></p>
1	<p><b>Unacceptable quality or has serious ethical concerns.</b></p>