



Guidance for Researchers: Applying for a Research Grant from Ataxia UK

This document is aimed at researchers interested in applying for funding from Ataxia UK and contains information about grants offered by Ataxia UK and how to apply for them. Potential applicants are advised to also read Ataxia UK's Research strategy which outlines Ataxia UK's research activities and strategic themes.

Research funded by Ataxia UK

Ataxia UK funds research of relevance to ataxia. Specifically it will only consider funding research into conditions in which ataxia is the principle symptom, and in which the ataxia is likely to be progressive. This includes conditions such as Friedreich's ataxia, the spinocerebellar ataxias and other cerebellar ataxias (including idiopathic ones).

It does not include conditions such as multiple sclerosis, ataxic cerebral palsy, or other conditions in which ataxic symptoms are present as the result of another underlying condition. Research into ataxia due to traumas such as stroke, head injury and due to toxicity (e.g. from alcohol) are also not normally considered for funding. Additionally, Ataxia UK does not fund research into ataxia telangiectasia, as there are two established UK charities that support this form of ataxia (the A-T Society and Action for A-T).

The aims of Ataxia UK are to maximise the impact of research in:

- improving diagnosis;
- developing treatments that are available to patients.

Types of research proposal considered by Ataxia UK

Ataxia UK will consider a variety of larger proposals, including:

- research projects;
- PhD studentships;
- research fellowships.

Ataxia UK will also consider smaller requests for funds, including:

- small grants (less than £5000);
- contributions to ataxia meetings and conferences;
- travel awards for researchers or students presenting at conferences;
- satellite meetings at conferences.

Because Ataxia UK is a small charity:

- grants will normally last for one to three years and should not normally exceed £25-30,000 as total budget requested, although in exceptional circumstances this can be higher (up to £60-70,000);
- applicants are encouraged to seek potential co-funding from other organisations;
- long-term research projects (i.e. more than three years) are not normally supported;
- it prefers to fund a variety of relatively short projects to the point where grant-holders can realistically seek funds from elsewhere, although it may consider continuation funding.

Eligibility

Proposals will be accepted from:

- academic institutions;
- private sector research companies;
- suitably qualified individuals;
- collaborative groups formed from a combination of the above.

Ataxia UK normally will only accept proposals in which the principal applicant is based in the UK or in a European country that is part of Euro-ataxia (see <http://www.euro-ataxia.org/>). However, Ataxia UK would be willing to consider applications with immediate potential benefit to people with ataxia from researchers based elsewhere.

How to apply for a grant

Applicants are encouraged to contact Ataxia UK to discuss their applications with the Head of Research before submitting a proposal. Application forms are available from the Ataxia UK website. Here you can access:

- preliminary application form (*projects, studentships, fellowships*);
- small grant application form (*small projects*);
- conference/travel grant application form (*travel awards, conferences*).

For satellite meetings and requests for contributions towards other meetings or conferences, please email the Head of Research (research@ataxia.org.uk).

Application process

For larger grants (*projects, studentships, fellowships*), there are two stages in the selection process:

1. Preliminary application

Initially applicants should submit a preliminary application. Forms are available from Ataxia UK's Head of Research, or to download from the Ataxia UK website. Deadlines for preliminary grant applications are also available on the Ataxia UK website. Preliminary applications will be reviewed by Ataxia UK's Scientific Advisory Committee, which will decide whether an application is within Ataxia UK's remit.

Please note the limit of one preliminary application per research group as main applicant per round of grant applications.

2. Full application

If applications pass this initial selection process applicants are invited to submit a full application (a full application form is available on Ataxia UK's website for reference only). All full research proposals for projects, studentships and fellowships will be reviewed by at least two external peer reviewers, and assessed, with the reviews, by Ataxia UK's Scientific Advisory Committee.

Smaller grants (*small projects, travel awards, conferences and meetings*) are normally fast-tracked, with applications only going through one stage of assessment. Normally, these types of grants are not sent for external peer review but are assessed solely by Ataxia UK's Scientific Advisory Committee. Applicants submitting these types of proposals should note that the Scientific Advisory Committee will assess each application on a case-by-case basis and decide whether the fast-track scheme is suitable, or whether the application needs to be peer reviewed externally and assessed using the normal project grant application process.

Researchers are not allowed to apply for a new grant while having a research project already funded by Ataxia UK unless in exceptional circumstances (this excludes smaller grants).

Selection criteria

When selecting projects to recommend for funding, the Scientific Advisory Committee considers the scientific quality, likelihood of success and potential benefit to people with ataxia as key parameters, and takes advice from external peer reviewers. Projects need to be based on strong preliminary evidence and show a clear pathway to maximising the impact of the outputs generated, and where appropriate, for the continuation of the studies at the end of the funded project. Innovative projects involving promising new ideas are encouraged, as are projects that are close to a potential treatment. Addressing the needs identified by people with ataxia, and the gaps in the knowledge identified by healthcare professionals, are also important to Ataxia UK (see pages 4-5 of the research strategy for details).

Ataxia UK will look favourably upon projects that:

- have implications to more than one type of ataxia;
- have the potential to involve joint collaborative funding;
- involve collaborations between research groups;
- fund younger researchers who potentially may be developing a career in ataxia research (e.g. PhD studentships);
- include public and patient involvement activities (this is considered essential for all clinical studies involving people with ataxia as participants).

Selection process

The Scientific Advisory Committee will provide advice to the Trustees on whether specific research proposals should be funded, as well as advising on the merits of

applications involving information exchange and dissemination (e.g. travel awards). The Trustees will make the final decisions, based on the Scientific Advisory Committee's advice and the funds available.

Ataxia UK may also commission a specific researcher or research group to investigate a topic of interest. These applications will also be peer reviewed and discussed by the Scientific Advisory Committee, who will advise the Trustees.

Research monitoring and evaluation

Funded projects are appraised through the critical evaluation of annual reports and occasional site visits by Ataxia UK's research staff. As a member of the Association of Medical Research charities (AMRC), Ataxia UK also uses Researchfish; an online system for collecting information on outputs, outcomes and impact of research (see <https://www.researchfish.net/>).

Resubmissions policy

Ataxia UK will sometimes invite researchers to resubmit a proposal. Invited resubmissions for the same project as was originally submitted normally need to be made within six months of the Committee's decision. In exceptional circumstances uninvited resubmissions may be considered. Please note that resubmissions will not be accepted for projects that the Committee has deemed to be insufficiently focused on ataxia or are of low scientific quality. Resubmissions will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Scientific Advisory Committee.

Members of Ataxia UK's Scientific Advisory Committee

Scientific members:

Dr Claire Kelly
Department of Neurosciences
Cardiff University

Dr Marija Sajic
Postdoctoral Research Associate, Department of Neuroinflammation
Institute of Neurology, University College London

Dr Franziska Denk
Lecturer, Wolfson CARD
King's College London

Dr Gita Ramdharry
Consultant Allied Health Professional in Neuromuscular Diseases
Queen Square Centre for Neuromuscular Diseases, UCLH

Professor Keith Morris

Professor of Biomedical Sciences and Biostatistics
Cardiff School of Health Sciences

Dr Mark Pook
Reader in Biosciences
Brunel University

Lay members:

Rosemary Homayoun
Nathan Hall
Harriet Bonney

In attendance:

Professor Barry Hunt
Ataxia UK Trustee Scientific Advisor
Faculty of Health and Human Sciences, University of Hertfordshire

Dr Julie Greenfield
Ataxia UK Head of Research

Dr Emily Cutting
Ataxia UK Research Manager

Members of the Committee are rotated as recommended by the Association of Medical Research charities.

Further information

For further information on Ataxia UK's Research strategy or any other aspects of research (such as applying for funding) please contact Ataxia UK's Head of Research (jgreenfield@ataxia.org.uk). More details can also be found on Ataxia UK's website: www.ataxia.org.uk

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