



Frequently Asked Questions: NIHR Research Professorship & Global Health Research Professorship & Sir Jules Thorn Award for Biomedical Research

Abbreviations used:

NIHR RP: NIHR Research Professorship

NIHR GHRP: NIHR Global Health Research Professorship

SJT: Sir Jules Thorn Award for Biomedical Research

LMIC: Low & Middle Income Country

General Questions

Do I have to be in the life and medical sciences (LMS) faculties to apply to these schemes?

No, both calls are open to any applicant who meets the eligibility criteria, regardless of your faculty. However, some eligibility criteria, e.g. NIHR RP requiring supporting service delivery; SJT requiring research involving patients, mean the calls are most relevant to LMS faculties. This is why internal selection process is coordinated within this LMS Research Coordination Office.

Who at UCL has been successful for these awards and can I contact them?

Please contact the SLMS Research Facilitators (slms.facilitators@ucl.ac.uk) in the first instance. Lists of successful awardees are available for [NIHR RP](#), [NIHR GHRP](#) and [SJT](#).

I am not able to make the interview dates can I reschedule?

Unfortunately, we are unable to offer alternative interview dates/times due to panel availability so please ensure this is clear in your diary.

Why must I go through internal review? Why can't I submit directly to the funder?

For the NIHR RP, GHRP and SJT schemes, UCL is limited in the number of submissions allowed (two, one and one, respectively). We conduct a two-stage internal selection process (shortlisting of written applications followed by interview) to ensure that all UCL candidates are given fair and due consideration, and to ensure that the highest calibre candidates and applications go forward to the funders.

Is the UCL selection process effective?

Yes – candidates selected through UCL's internal processes have been extremely successful with these schemes. Over the last five calls, UCL candidates have won two out of the five SJT awards made nationally, and five out of 24 NIHR RP awards.

Can I apply to both the NIHR Research Professorship and Sir Jules Thorn Award at the same time?

If yes, do I have to submit two different internal application forms?

Yes you can, and yes you do. Whilst the two schemes are aimed at individuals at a similar career stage, their requirements are different, so it is necessary to have different internal application formats. If you apply to both schemes it is important that you also submit a bespoke programme of research to each scheme, ensuring you meet each scheme's requirements.

How do I apply through the UCL review process?

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Please refer to the [LMS Internally Managed Calls](#) webpage for internal guidance and application forms.

NIHR RP & GHRP

I am a Professor: Am I still eligible?

Yes. NIHR guidance states that “nominees at/close to the Professorial level should be qualified for a Professorship within the coming few years or recently have been appointed as a Professor”.

Candidates do need to be within five years at their current level of seniority. You should provide a very clear justification as to what benefit this award would bring to your upward trajectory and how it would change your potential to be a leader in your field i.e. you shouldn't already be an established leader in the field. Successful UCL candidates in recent years have been newly appointed Professors (or very close to official promotion) at the time of application. NIHR Senior Investigators are not eligible to apply.

I am not a clinician or health professional. Am I still eligible?

Yes, you don't have to be a clinician or health professional to apply to this scheme. However when considering your suitability you should be able to strongly justify how you meet the following criteria of the scheme: i) Ability to demonstrate direct patient and public benefit within the lifetime, or soon after completion of, the award; ii) Requirement to continue directly service delivery during the award, or collaboration to support service delivery.

What is the funding cap?

£2M over five years. Eligible costs include salary of the fellow, 3 support posts, research costs, travel expenses, leadership development, sabbaticals. Full cost of clinical trials is not eligible, however.

What institutional commitment is required?

Support of the ongoing employment of the applicant beyond the duration of the award b) any funds freed up by the award (PI's salary) will need to be recycled to increase research capacity c) support of the project (i.e. facilities, resources, relief from teaching) and the applicant's leadership development (e.g. mentorship, training).

Can I continue with clinical duties during my Professorship?

Yes – this is a key element of the scheme. The majority of RPs' time will be spent on research; however, a continuing link with service delivery will be an essential part of funded professorships. In this regard, RPs will be funded to continue to spend up to 2 sessions per week delivering service directly or, if the nominee is not a health, public health or care professional, an equivalent time collaborating with others to facilitate service delivery. GHRPs will be funded to spend the equivalent time (up to 2 sessions per week) delivering services directly in the relevant LMIC or have relevant collaborations which can be supported to fulfil this. Equally, if the nominee is not a health professional, an equivalent time collaborating with others to facilitate service delivery in the relevant LMIC.

What are the NIHR assessment criteria?

All applications are assessed on the following criteria:

- Demonstration of the nominee's current capabilities as a research leader;
- The outputs from and impact of research undertaken to date;
- The success of the nominee in securing funds for their research to date;
- Demonstration of a steep career trajectory to date over the last 5-10 years;
- The likelihood that the nominee will make a long-term contribution to translational research, capacity building and research leadership in their chosen field in the UK;

- The projected impact of the NIHR Research Professorship on the nominee's career and future research trajectory;
- The quality of the proposed research programme and the likelihood of it securing future external funding;
- The suitability of the proposed partnership between the HEI and NHS organisation or other provider of public health and/or care services and programme for the development of the Research Professor;
- The commitment of the proposed host institution to support the nominee in the short, medium and long term and commitment of the provider to empowering promotion of translation at a local level;
- The strategic significance and value of the nominee and their research to the host institution at a local and national level;
- The appropriateness of resources claimed and whether the total funding requested represents good value for the use of public/NIHR funds.

In addition, for NIHR Global Research Professorship applications:

- Global health or care need: evidence as to how and why a specific issue or discipline has been identified for research as an LMIC priority area and unmet need (which may include engagement with relevant stakeholders e.g. policy makers, practitioners, patients, service users, carers) and how the research programme and partnerships will address this.
- The likelihood that the nominee will make a long-term contribution to translational research, capacity building and research leadership in their chosen field in the OECD DAC list country or countries in which they are working.
- A strong track record in global health, public health or social care and evidence of relevant and substantive collaborations and partnerships to support the application. Evidence of input by collaborators to the content and design of the proposed research programme and an outline of how they will be equitably engaged throughout implementation, analysis, reporting and dissemination.
- The suitability of the proposed partnership and programme for the development of the Research Professor.

What advice do you have for presenting a strong application?

From previous years we have found that the following types of proposal do well at review:

- Proposals with clear translational outputs, tangible scope for patient benefit, and a well-articulated workplan for how this will be achieved
- A well thought-through and tailored training and development plan, with a clear explanation of how the NIHR award would be transformative to the applicant's career.
- Strong justification for each research aim / objective.

Applicants should avoid the following:

- A research proposal that is exploratory or programmatic without a clear definition of the translation outputs or route to patient benefit.
- A strong bias towards high-risk or linearly dependent objectives: NIHR is typically a fairly low-risk funder. If there are high risk elements to the research, a very clearly defined workplan with contingencies should be provided.

Sir Jules Thorn Award for Biomedical Research

What amount of time must I spend on this award?

SJT stipulate that the work involved must be the major commitment of the PI, comprising at least 70% of his/her research time or 50% of his/her total time, whichever is greater.

What is the funding cap?

Applications for up to £1.7M of direct research costs up to five years are permitted.

What institutional commitment is required?

UCL is required to fund your salary and cover indirect costs. In addition, there must be visible strategic commitment to the research by the host institution.

What type of translational research does this award fund?

Experience from past rounds is that this award funds translational research at the experimental medicine/first-in-man stage. Applications that balance applied translational work with some mechanism-based research tend to do well. Those that focus only on preclinical / mechanistic work or only on clinical application tend to fare less well. A list awarded research programmes is available [here](#).

What advice do you have for presenting a strong application?

From previous years we have found that the following types of proposals do well at review:

- A research programme that will be transformative, and will make a very distinctive contribution that SJT can support
- A clear timescale and trajectory in terms of how the research will benefit patients – this can be longer than the 5 years that NIHR expect but the pathway must be clear.
- The project should address a defined unmet need in a clinical group for which there will be a practical outcome.
- SJT will tolerate projects with an element of risk, as long as it is well planned for, in order to reach ground-breaking outcomes.
- Whilst the overall scheme focus is applied translational research, an element of mechanistic work has been acceptable in previous applications.

Applicants should avoid the following:

- A research programme that focuses only on clinical application (i.e. a clinical trial) or only on mechanistic/pre-clinical work.