

# The Brian Mercer Feasibility Award

## 1. Overview

**Aim:** The Brian Mercer Feasibility Awards aim to provide initial support to test the technical and economical feasibility of commercialising an aspect of their scientific research, possibly in conjunction with a third party.

The Mercer Feasibility Awards are intended to help academics take the steps necessary to demonstrate that their concept has a high potential for commercial success. The project will have demonstrated successful past research and will now be entering the development stage. The proposal should address the technical viability to show that it is economic and competitive. It must also be shown that there is a commercial need of a sufficient magnitude to attract later finance, if the study is successful. Third party financial and in-kind assistance will always be helpful in making the case for Mercer Feasibility Award support

If the idea or concept is at a later stage of development, you should apply for the Brian Mercer Award for Innovation, which provides funding for individuals or groups to develop an already proven concept or prototype through to the creation of a near-market product for commercial exploitation, i.e. to a stage where an approach for venture capital becomes a reality.

**Subjects covered:** Awards can be made in the topic areas of the built environment, energy and clean technology and nanoscience/nanotechnology, electrotechnology and biomedical sciences.

**Eligibility:** The Brian Mercer Feasibility Award is open to applicants of any nationality who have a PhD (or are of equivalent standing in their profession), who hold a substantive post in a UK university or not-for-profit research organisation and who will be in post for at least the duration of the project. The project must commence within three months of the date of notification.

Applicants may make only one application per calendar year. Applications from individuals or groups who already have established contacts with industrial or commercial collaborators are particularly encouraged.

**Rounds:** These awards now operate on a rolling basis. There is no closing date as such, and applications will be assessed as and when they are submitted. Applicants are therefore encouraged to submit their proposals as soon as possible. Applications will be accepted until all funds for this award have been spent.

**Length of tenure:** The award can be held for a maximum of one year.

**Place of tenure:** The award must be held in a UK university or not-for-profit research organisation.

**Value:** Up to a maximum of £30,000 (including VAT where applicable).

**Number offered:** Six Brian Mercer Feasibility Awards are still available and applications are accepted on a rolling basis. The awards are being supported by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council.

The ERA Foundation are funding one award for electrotechnology (including telecommunications and IT systems). There are three biomedical science feasibility awards, which are supported by the Lord Leonard and Lady Estelle Wolfson Foundation.

**Results available:** Results should be available within six to ten weeks of completed applications being submitted and approved and our receipt of all relevant documents.

## 2. Completion of application

Applications can only be submitted online using the Royal Society's electronic Grant Application and Processing (e-GAP) system <https://e-gap.royalsociety.org> or via the e-GAP information link on the front page of the Society's web site). Applications cannot be submitted on paper.

Please read the below instructions before you start filling out your application, and refer to the guidance notes in the section that follows as you complete the form.

### Important e-GAP information

**Personal details:** Once logged on to e-GAP and before starting your application, click *My Details* at the top of the page. Please ensure that this information is up to date.

**Automatic log-out:** Save your work regularly to prevent accidental loss of text. N.B. If the system does not detect any activity for 3 hours it will log out and everything that has not been saved will be lost. Typing and moving between tabs within an application is not considered an activity, you need to have pressed the *Save* button.

**Loss of work:** You should not have multiple browser windows/tabs of your application open simultaneously and only one user should edit an application at a time, otherwise changes might be lost.

**Character limits:** If you exceed specified character limits the system will not allow you to save (N.B. that limits refer to characters, not words, and that the count includes spaces). We recommend that you first type and save the text in a word processor and check the character limit before pasting it into e-GAP. Character limits apply to text boxes, page limits to PDFs.

**Plain text:** When entering plain text, avoid using symbols as some may not be accepted by e-GAP. You should generate a PDF of your application (by choosing 'print' on the form) to check that the application appears as you want it to.

**Uploading PDF documents:** When uploading PDFs, add your name and a heading to the top of every page. Please ensure that there are no security settings activated on uploaded PDFs and avoid uploading documents containing illustrations with fine details or colour, as this can cause problems when creating a PDF of the application. Please note we will only print applications in black and white.

**Mandatory fields:** All fields on an application form that are marked with an asterisk (\*) require an entry before the application can be submitted. If a mandatory field is not relevant to you, please enter 'N/A'.

**Email addresses:** e-GAP relies on automatic email contact. It is therefore essential that you enter email addresses accurately throughout. When you enter an email address into e-GAP it will create a new account if that address has not been seen before, even if the referee already has an account under a different address. Therefore please check what email login referees may already be using for e-GAP to avoid creating multiple accounts. It is the Applicant's responsibility to ensure that the Host Organisation Approver, Heads

of Department and Referees have all been contacted. The Royal Society will not be held responsible for automated emails that are not received due to address errors or spam filters.

**Tracking progress:** You can track the progress of your application through the submission and review processes by going into your e-GAP account, selecting '*My Applications*' and then '*Manage Application*' for the application in question.

**Application sharing:** You can allow other e-GAP users to view your draft application, in advance of submission, by providing their email address and entering the permissions you want them to have. They will be able to log in using their existing password and also see and, depending on permissions, amend your application. To do this, the other e-GAP user needs to click on *My Applications* once they have logged on in order to see *your* application.

**Application deletion:** You can delete your application at any time and will be able to recover it for a period of 7 days afterwards. After this it will be permanently removed from the system.

## **Application Guidance Notes**

### **Assessment criteria**

Applicants should note the following criteria used in assessing applications:

- The primary considerations in the assessment process will be the scientific, engineering and technological excellence of the applicant(s) and the quality, novelty and commercial potential of the proposed project;
- The extent of any similar or precursory work undertaken by the applicant(s) as well as any funding provided for the project by other bodies and the overall value for money of the proposal will also be considered in assessing applications;
- Priority will also be given to truly innovative proposals which take a project forward from concept to prototype to a point at which the idea could be presented for venture capital support.

## Completing the e-GAP form

In the below table, each box represents a tab on the e-GAP application form; the left-hand column contains the questions within each of these tabs as set out in the form; the right-hand column contains useful guidance on its completion. Please read these notes carefully as you fill out the form.

<b>Summary</b>	
Summary table	When your application form is complete, all sections on this table will have a green tick. You will then be able to submit your application.

<b>Applicant personal details</b>	
Title, names, address etc	Take care to complete this accurately. Errors in this section can cause difficulties in processing your application. Fields will be pre-filled with the details from your e-GAP account. If details are wrong, please make changes and also update your account information by choosing ' <i>My Details</i> ' on the first page after login.
University and country for PhD	Please provide details of your PhD. If you do not have a PhD but are of equivalent standing in your profession, please give appropriate details.
Co-applicants	Please list details of any co-applicants limit 4000 characters including spaces. This can also be uploaded as a PDF document if preferred. Information regarding industrial or commercial collaborators will be asked in the Proposal section. (Please keep this to 1 side of A4).

<b>Applicant career summary</b>	
Statement of qualifications and career	Please list the research positions you have held for the last 5 years including dates.
Outline of present research	Please give a brief summary of your research experience as background to the current application (limit 1000 characters including spaces).
Publications	List up to five most recent peer-reviewed publications. You should give full details including the names of all authors, the full title, the journal in which it was published and the date. Papers accepted for publication may be included. Please note that reprints are not required.
Present position	Please state your current position i.e. lecturer, reader. Maximum 200 characters including spaces.
Present Department	Your department. Maximum 200 characters including spaces.

<b>Organisation</b>	
---------------------	--

Host organisation	<p>Select the organisation where the research will be carried out. All applications <i>must</i> be approved by the host organisation authorities e.g. research grants office, finance department, etc. (For details, see 'Submission process' section below)</p> <p>Most establishments appear in the drop-down list but if your proposed organisation is not there, please contact the Royal Society.</p> <p>It is your responsibility to ensure that your application is complete in time for the host organisation to process it and provide their approval by the closing date. It is recommended that you allow at least 5 working days for this process.</p>
-------------------	--

<b>Proposal</b>	
Project Title	Maximum of 120 characters including spaces.
Collaboration	<p>Please list the names of any industrial or commercial collaborators.</p> <p>A supporting letter from each of your collaborators should be uploaded. The letters should confirm their willingness to support your project and give details of the resources they will be supplying, i.e. time or 'money in kind'. These letters should be uploaded in PDF format and be addressed to The Chair of the Brian Mercer Award Panel, The Royal Society. Please note that it is not necessary to post a hard copy of the letters. If there are no collaborators please state this in the text box.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Please elaborate on your plans for potential commercialisation. You should provide a paragraph on each of the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How big is the potential market and have you identified a specific market sector?</li> <li>• Is there a planned route to commercialisation?</li> <li>• How will you handle IPR?</li> <li>• What is the unique selling point?</li> <li>• Have you had any experience of commercialising research?</li> </ul> <p>The information can be entered directly. Maximum 4000 characters including spaces or if you prefer, the information can be uploaded as a PDF document. Please remember to put a title at the top of the PDF document. Do not exceed 1 page of A4 sized paper or equivalent.</p>
Abbreviated title	Please Specify your topic (e.g. built environment, energy, clean technology, nanoscience, nanotechnology, electrotechnology and biomedical science).
Start/end date	Please note that the project cannot not exceed 1 year.
Scientific abstract	<p>This should contain background information on the research which you have completed for which you are seeking funds to assess the feasibility of commercialisation. You should also clearly define your aims.</p> <p><b>Plain text only:</b> please enter a maximum of 3,500 characters including spaces in the text box.</p> <p>You will not be able to upload a PDF document for this field.</p>
Patents	Please enter details of any relevant patents which you hold or applying for, including patent numbers and dates of registration.

Lay Report	<p>Please provide a lay summary of your proposed project. This should be understandable by an A-level science student. You should explain why you have chosen to work in this subject area, what it is about your research to date that you find particularly important and why you believe it is timely to assess the feasibility of commercialising this research. Please also explain the potential impact or wider benefits to society of your research.</p> <p><b>Plain text only</b> – please enter a maximum of 3,500 characters including spaces in the text box.</p> <p>You will not be able to upload a PDF document for this field.</p>
Project description	<p>This outline proposal should be a self-contained case for support, stressing novelty and potential applicability. It should include statements on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The aim and objectives of the proposed project</li> <li>• How the proposal relates to current (or earlier) work of the applicant(s) or other members of the team</li> <li>• The programme of work, including the methods to be used and timescales</li> <li>• Details of collaborative arrangements</li> <li>• Justification for the choice of the items or equipment in the application</li> </ul> <p>A maximum of 8000 characters (including spaces) or two pages attachment is allowed.</p> <p>If you are uploading a PDF attachment, please type “See attachment” in the text field.</p>

<b>Financial details</b>	
Sum requested from the Royal Society	<p>Total Requested (up to £30,000)</p> <p>Please give the total amount requested inclusive of any VAT payable.</p>
Other funding sources	<p>Please list your current and recent research grants and any other income you receive for research related to this project.</p> <p>Please also list any pending applications made elsewhere to support the project.</p>
Financial Plan	<p>Please give a full breakdown of the amount requested, including VAT where applicable, and show details of equipment, materials, the resources required, and hence the case for an award. Maximum 5000 characters/one side of A4.</p>

- Applications can include project related costs including provision for essential scientific equipment (including installation costs), spares, software procurement, maintenance, relocation, rental or access charges (where any of these are identified specifically with equipment for which the award is sought), essential consumable materials, services (including travel and subsistence costs, reprint/page charges, purchase of specialist named publications not otherwise available, fieldwork, software licences and dedicated recurrent computing costs).
- Applications may not include provision for staff costs (whether personal payments to the grant holder or to other persons), patents and other related costs, payments for the use of financial, personnel and other central or departmental services, library services, administrative, general running or overhead and other unspecified costs, office expenses, photocopying, publishing costs, stationery, postage, telephone, faxes etc, and general premises or accommodation costs.

### Departmental support

Head of department

Please provide accurate details of your head of department.

**Please check which email address your HoD would like to use, as they may already be registered on e-GAP** and mistakes may lead to a delay in processing your application. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure you have the correct email address

Click "*Add HoD*". Then "*Check email*" allows you to check if they are registered on e-GAP. If they are not, please enter their name and title.

You then have the option to choose "*Contact now*" or "*Don't contact*".

- "*Contact now*" means the HoD can log on to e-GAP now and provide their statement, potentially without your application being complete. You may enter a personal message and you should send them a copy of Appendix 1 below separately.
- "*Don't contact*" means the HoD will be contacted when your application has been submitted and approved by your research office, and then they can provide their reference.

Please ensure that you press 'save' after selecting your HoD.

The deadline to provide the HoD statement is a week after the application

### Equal opportunities

<p>Equal opportunities</p>	<p>The Royal Society is committed to its policy of Equal Opportunity in the provision of its awards. Please help us to monitor the effectiveness of this policy by providing the information requested.</p> <p>This information will be kept separately from the rest of your application and will not be seen by those involved in the selection process, including referees etc.</p> <p>This section is optional; however the Society would greatly appreciate it if you complete the details. You must either complete the form or tick the box stating that you do not want to complete the form ('Opt Out'). If you do not tick one or other of the boxes the system will regard your application as incomplete and will not allow you to submit it.</p>
----------------------------	---

### 3. Submission process

- Once the e-GAP application form is complete, you are strongly advised to create a PDF version of it and check it thoroughly (including email addresses and uploaded PDF files) before submitting it for approval by your host organisation.
- Once you have submitted your application for approval, an automatic email will be sent to the approving department at your host organisation asking them to log on to the system. You will not be able to edit your application after it has been submitted for approval. The approver will either: approve and submit your application; contact you to request modifications; or decline your application and contact you.
- It is your responsibility to ensure that you complete your application in time for the host organisation to process it (including requesting changes) and provide their approval by the closing date. We recommend that you allow at least five working days for this process.
- If your host organisation approver requests modifications through the e-GAP email facility, they can unlock your application, allowing you to edit it. Once you have completed the requested changes, please use the application summary to re-submit your application for approval. Please also contact your Head of Department and alert them to the changes.
- Once your host organisation has approved your application and submitted it to the Royal Society it will not be possible to make any changes.
- Once the closing date has passed, host organisations cannot approve applications and submit them to the Royal Society and unapproved applications are removed from consideration. No late applications will be accepted.
- When your application has been approved your Head of Department will receive an automated email requesting them to provide their statement on e-GAP. These should be submitted as soon as possible.
- We recommend you check that your application and references are submitted on time. To see details of the host organisation approver and to check the submission status of your application and references, log into e-GAP and click on the link to the Application Summary.
- In the fortnight following the closing date, your submitted application will be checked by the Royal Society. If it conforms to the eligibility requirements, the eligibility status on the Application Summary page will be marked as 'Complete'.

#### Check list



Please use the following check list to ensure that you have completed all stages of the application process by the relevant deadlines:

1. Ensure that all PDFs which have been uploaded are free of any security settings.
2. Before submitting you application, check that your Head of Department is available and willing to provide references within one week of your submitting your application.
3. Submit application to host organisation approver via e-GAP.
4. Check that the host organisation approver has approved your application and that your HoD has provided their statement.
5. Send Appendix 1 ('Instructions for Head of Department') to your Head of Department.

#### **4. Peer Review process**

- All applications for Brian Mercer Feasibility Award are initially reviewed and assessed by 2 members of the selection panel who have the most appropriate scientific expertise.
- If your proposal is deemed to be of a sufficient standard, it will be reviewed by at least two independent referees, suggested by the panel members.
- Your proposal and the references will then be circulated to the panel and a decision will be reached.
- It is expected that applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by email within 6 to 10 weeks of their completed application being submitted and approved and our receipt of all relevant documents.
- Some feedback may subsequently be available on request, although for those not sent out for review, the level of feedback will be limited.

Please be assured that the Royal Society specifically requests anyone involved in reviewing applications to consider them in confidence.

#### **6. Enquiries**

If you have any enquiries about the submission of your application or about the e-GAP process, please contact the Grant Scheme Manager by email to [innovationgrants@royalsociety.org](mailto:innovationgrants@royalsociety.org) or calling 020 7451 2539.

## Appendix 1

Please pass a copy of these instructions to your Head of Department. Once you have submitted your application for approval they will be contacted automatically by email.

### Instructions for Head of Department

Statements can be submitted online using the Royal Society's electronic Grant Application and Processing (e-GAP) system. Applications cannot be considered until the HoD statement has been received.

The e-GAP system automatically logs you out after periods of inactivity (typing is not considered activity). Therefore we recommend that you save your work frequently or, preferably, write your reference in a word processor first and then copy the text into e-GAP, using the following instructions:

1. Go to the e-GAP website: <https://e-gap.royalsociety.org/Login.aspx>
2. Enter your email address. If you have never used e-GAP before, an account will have automatically been generated for you using the email address supplied by the Applicant.
3. Enter your password. If you have forgotten your password, or are using e-GAP for the first time, click the 'Forgotten Password?' link and a password will be sent to your email address directly from e-GAP.
4. Click on 'Tasks'
5. Click on 'Reference List'
6. Click on 'Provide Reference' (if you would like to view a PDF of the application first, click 'Print Application', or you may view the application form in its original format by clicking on 'View Application' on screen at the top of the reference form).
7. Complete both sections including:
  - Support - the written reference on both the applicant and the proposal.
  - Details of statement provider - Your personal details including your position, institution, department and contact details.Click on 'Save' at regular intervals as you proceed.
8. Click on 'Save' and then 'Submit' (If the 'Submit' button does not appear, one of the mandatory fields, indicated with \*, has not been completed. Please check all necessary fields are complete and click 'Save' again – the 'Submit' button should then appear.)

Your reference is then automatically forwarded to the Royal Society.

If you have any questions about providing your reference please contact the Grants Team on 020 7451 2539 or email: [innovationgrants@royalsociety.org](mailto:innovationgrants@royalsociety.org)