

British Renal Society Research Committee

Terms of Reference

The British Renal Society Research Committee is convened as a subcommittee of the British Renal Society and is subject to its Memorandum and Articles of Association. The basis of operation was agreed by the BRS Council initially on 1 March, 2001 (then revised: 15/05/2003, 02/05/2006, 13/02/2014) as:

The Research Committee would be:

- an independent scientific group in evaluating grants
- a multi-professional group
- financed by the BRS
- reporting to the BRS Council.

The Chair will be responsible for reviewing the Terms of Reference after each cycle of grant awarding and suggest appropriate modifications.

Membership

Membership of the Research Committee should be formalised and included in the written constitution of the BRS.

- Membership should be in tri-annual rolling terms (one-third of members should step down per year, members can serve a maximum of two consecutive 3 year terms)
- The Group should be multi-disciplinary and should, if possible, include a lay member
- Membership should be by invitation of the Research Committee. Nominations from affiliated organisations would be sought. Their individual associations should support self-nominations.
- Demonstrable expertise/experience in research was a key requirement for membership
- Members with appropriate expertise may be co-opted by the committee to serve on a short or longer-term basis
- An advisory network should be developed with extended membership from which members with necessary expertise may be co-opted
- The Chair should be elected from within the Research Committee membership by a simple majority of the full membership of the committee. Council should ratify the appointment.
- The BRS President or their nominee shall be a member of the Research Committee

The committee will meet, at most, bi-annually; the great majority of the work will be done by email.

Travelling costs will be met by BRS and administrative support will be from the BRS Secretariat.

The Chair of the Research Committee will be a Guarantor/Trustee of the BRS with an *ex officio* place on the BRS Council, and will be accountable to the BRS Council for the operation of the committee. The BRS Council will have no direct influence on the operation of the committee, its membership, or its decisions on the award of grants.

Aims

- To promote clinical research in the subject areas of renal disease and renal replacement therapy.
- Priority for grants will be given to multi-professional and/or multi-centred research.
- Preference will be given to studies in subject areas which, in the opinion of the committee, would be unlikely to be supported by the other sources of research funding in renal medicine (e.g. NKRF, MRC, Wellcome Trust, BSI, BTS), but nonetheless worth funding.
- Research proposals may come from doctors, nurses, or other professions allied to medicine (e.g. dietetics) or from a multidisciplinary group, or from health service researchers (e.g. public health physicians, social scientists).
- The decision whether or not to fund a research project will be based solely on the value of the proposed research (scientific validity, clinical importance of the subject being studied, practical relevance of the results). Information on applicants' previous "track record" in clinical research will be invited, but applicants with no previous track record will not be disqualified for this reason alone.

Financial arrangements

- Contributions will be solicited from companies operating in the area of renal medicine by the BRS president or by other members of the Board of Trustees. These will be made payable to the "BRS Research Fund" and placed in a high interest account. Signatories to the account will be the usual signatories of the BRS.
- Corporate donations may be made either to support research in specific areas or at the discretion of the committee.
- All grants will be "unrestricted" in the sense that, once a grant has been made, the donor company will have no control over the conduct of the research or subsequent publication. All results will belong to the researchers. Acknowledgement of the role of a specific company in supporting research will be required of grant-holders using a form of words along the lines "supported by an unrestricted grant from **xxx** plc,

administered independently by the British Renal Society Research Committee”

- An evidenced summary of grant expenses should be submitted by each grant holder with the final report, reviewed by the Chair of the committee. The BRS has the right to recover monies unspent after the term of the grant has expired.

Mechanism for inviting applications for grants

The availability of research grants will be advertised in relevant journals, e.g. British Journal of Renal Medicine, Nephrology Dialysis Transplantation, etc (depending on cost and perceived impact) and on websites accessed regularly by renal health professionals. The advertisements will seek grant applications, drawing attention to the aims of the Fund, as set out above. Grants will be advertised annually with a 3-month deadline. Electronic submission will be encouraged. The criteria used to judge applications (see below) will be included for information in the information package sent to applicants.

The committee will decide, on the basis of the funds available and on whether these are designated for specific research areas, how many grants to offer and at what value. Grants may be made available for consumables, one-off purchases of items of equipment, or salaries, including part-time salaries to allow those working in clinical areas protected research time to pursue a project.

Mechanism for allocation of grants

All grant applications will be sent to the BRS Secretariat and then forward to the Chairman, who will choose two committee members (one of which may be the Chairman) to deal with each application, based on those members' area of expertise or (in the case of applications which are outside the known expertise of any of the committee members) who has had the lightest workload. The nominated committee member will then select two external referees and write/email them asking them to return an opinion on the application based on the following criteria:

- a) Is the research proposal practicable?
- b) Is the research proposal original?
- c) Would it answer an important question?
- d) Does the group proposing the research have the necessary expertise and facilities to permit the research to be performed?
- e) If the applicant has no previous research experience, is there evidence that the applicant has local access to regular advice from someone with previous research experience?
- f) Is the subject area under study within the remit of the BRS Research Fund, i.e. clinical, and related to renal disease or renal replacement therapy?

- g) Is the study design appropriate – would the results be publishable in a reputable journal?

Once the referees' reports have been received, the responsible committee member should read these and return them to the Chairman. Committee members should aim to identify suitable referees within 2 weeks of receipt of an application and to check by phone, email or fax with the referees before sending manuscripts that they would be prepared to offer an opinion. Referees will be asked to return their opinions within 4 weeks of receipt. Referees should not be approached if they have competing grants submitted in the same grant round.

Once the referees' reports have been received the committee member should read these and return them to the Chairman. A summary of each application together with the committee member's and external referee reports will be made accessible electronically to all members of the committee. Committee members will lead on the applications they have been asked to review and present a summary of the application and referee reports, issues and concerns to the full committee at a face to face meeting to discuss allocation of funds. If there are differences of opinion, these will be resolved by a majority vote among members attending the committee meeting. Once a decision has been made, all applicants will receive an email or letter informing them of the decision, together with anonymous referees' reports and the committee member's report.

Conflict of interest

Any member of the committee with a conflict of interest (for example a named collaborator/ co-investigator on the grant application or an employee in the same organisation as the grant applicant/ co-investigators) will be asked to leave the committee at each stage the bid is discussed to avoid any conflict of interests.

Grant-awarding process

- Priority for grants will be given to multi-professional and/or multi-centred research.
- The size of grants available should be formally stated in the literature and on the website. Examples of previous awards should be included.
- The requirement to submit applications anonymously should be formally removed from the terms of reference.
- Formal annual meetings of the Research Committee should be mandatory.
- At the end of the grant-awarding round constructive feedback should be sent to all applicants.

- Successful applicants should submit 12 monthly reports to the Research Committee.
- At the conclusion of the research, a report should be presented at the BRS Conference. Authors should seek to publish the results of their research in a peer-reviewed journal.
- For grants extending for more than 12 months, payments will be made on an annual basis subject to receipt of a progress report, which is judged to represent satisfactory progress by the members of the committee who judged the original application.
- Impact of the research will be followed up 2 years and 5 years after the research is completed through an email to the principal investigator, exploring how the research has influenced patient care or service provision, MDT team working or roles, individual staff development and research career (as appropriate).