

Guidance for applicants

1 Introduction

We welcome applications for projects that will improve the lives of people living with coeliac disease and other gluten related autoimmune conditions (hereafter referred to collectively as coeliac disease).

For the joint 2026 Epidemiology Research Call with Crohn's & Colitis UK, applications must fit the remit as outlined by both organisations in the scope of the call.

This guidance document should be used in conjunction with the grant application form and the grant terms and conditions.

Whilst every effort is made to ensure that information in this guidance is accurate, changes are possible, and the most up-to-date version of the guidance will be available on our website.

Applications will be judged on scientific and/or clinical merit, relevance to coeliac disease and being within the scope of any research call. They should also be in line with our Research Strategy. All decisions on quality and relevance are made by the Research Awards Panel after external independent peer and lay reviewers and not the charity's administrative staff (with the exception of sponsored dissertations).

1.1 Coeliac UK Research Strategy

All applications should fit with Coeliac UK's Research Strategy. Applicants are required to explain how their project fulfils the aims of our Research Strategy. As such, we recommend that all applicants read and strongly consider this document when writing their application. Our Research Strategy can be found here:

<https://www.coeliac.org.uk/our-research/about-research/research-strategy/>

1.2 Coeliac UK Organisation Strategy

Coeliac UK has an organisation strategy. We recommend that all applicants read and consider this strategy when writing their application. The current strategy guides the charity's work from 2025-2030 and can be found here:

<https://www.coeliac.org.uk/about-the-charity/who-we-are/our-strategy/>

1.3 Research priorities for coeliac disease

In 2017, Coeliac UK teamed up with the James Lind Alliance (JLA) to bring people with coeliac disease, those who care for them and healthcare professionals together to identify and agree upon a list of research priorities for coeliac disease. You can see the priorities on the research strategy page on our website: <https://www.coeliac.org.uk/our-research/about-research/research-strategy/>

In 2023 these research priorities were reviewed again by people with coeliac disease, their family members, carers and healthcare professionals and it was determined that the same top ten priorities remained.

We do not intend to exclusively restrict our funding to these priorities and will continue to support other aspects of innovative research into the cause, diagnosis, treatment and management of coeliac disease and the health impacts of gluten. However, applications

that specifically address these priorities will be considered more favourably. You will be required to outline which, if any, of the priorities your application addresses.

2 Patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE)

- 2.1 Patient and public involvement is about seeking the views and opinions of people affected by coeliac disease to provide them with the opportunity to influence the design of research proposals and to oversee projects which may include e.g. being a member of a project steering group or commenting on and developing research materials.
- 2.2 Patient and public engagement means working with those affected to share information in an active two way process e.g. holding discussion workshops around research outcomes and formulating ways to disseminate research to the target audience in the most effective way.
- 2.3 We encourage grant applicants to consider Coeliac UK’s policy and recommendations for PPIE (accessible on the research strategy page of our website: <https://www.coeliac.org.uk/our-research/about-research/research-strategy/>) when developing a research proposal.

3 Types of grant and eligibility

For our 2025 open research call we are, for the first time, implementing a two stage application process. The purpose is to determine what research is required and let the evidence gaps guide what money is required, rather than funding limits restricting and dictating what research may be achieved. Applicants are encouraged to be ambitious.

Researchers may apply for a grant of **no maximum value** and do not need to be constrained by the funding limits that have previously been set below. Coeliac UK may offer none, all, or part of the money requested. The funds offered will be dependent on a number of factors and at Coeliac UK’s discretion following the review process.

3.1 Research programmes

Purpose	Programme grants are designed to answer a single question or a small group of related questions. The programme should aim to create a virtual network of excellence in research into coeliac disease, with the foundation for longevity and for further research into the condition, beyond the original research programme grant.
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must align with our Research Strategy • The principal investigator must have a track record of excellence in research
Funding	≤ £750k (uncapped for the 2025 Research call)
Maximum duration	36 months

Review criteria	Along with the usual evaluation of relevance, scientific quality, feasibility and value for money, PPIE will also be considered.
Other notes	<p>This type of award is a priority to establish a strong research base in coeliac disease with the appropriate research networks.</p> <p>Collaborations internationally, across disciplines and conditions, where appropriate, are encouraged. As is securing additional funding outside of Coeliac UK, if possible.</p> <p>Calls for programme grants will be advertised on the Coeliac UK website and through other appropriate communication channels. They may be subject to a two stage application process.</p>

3.2 Project grants

Purpose	Project grants may be seen as a precursor to research programmes; a further step towards acquiring the necessary expertise, networks and research interest for longevity and success in coeliac disease research.
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must align with our Research Strategy
Funding	≤ £250k (uncapped for the 2025 Research Call)
Maximum duration	36 months
Review criteria	Refer to the guide for peer reviewers
Other notes	<p>It is hoped that collaborations across centres may be considered and across disciplines, where appropriate.</p> <p>They may be subject to a two stage application process.</p>

3.3 Innovative grants

Purpose	To support innovative short term, small scale, pilot or proof of concept projects.
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must align with our Research Strategy
Funding	≤ £40k (Uncapped for the 2025 Research Call)
Maximum duration	18 months
Review criteria	Refer to the guide for peer reviewers
Other notes	It is hoped that these grants will support research into innovative ideas in coeliac disease and the health

	<p>impacts of gluten and may encourage cross discipline working. If warranted, they may also lead to an application for a future programme grant or securing additional funding outside of Coeliac UK.</p> <p>Funding of these grants will be considered when there are additional funds available, over and above that required to support research programmes.</p> <p>They may be subject to a two stage application process.</p>
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3.4 Research fellowships

Purpose	The objective of the fellowship (clinical or non-clinical) is to build capacity in research into coeliac disease and the impacts of gluten, where there is currently a deficit, by encouraging the best graduates to embark on an early career in this field.
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be hosted at an institution that has the appropriate infrastructure, support and expertise to encourage and nurture a future career working in this field • Must align with our Research Strategy
Funding	≤ £250k
Maximum duration	36 months
Review criteria	<p>Refer to the guide for peer reviewers.</p> <p>The experience and quality of the supervisor will also be considered.</p> <p>If a jointly funded fellowship with the Medical Research Council (MRC) the peer review process is managed by the MRC.</p>
Other notes	<p>These may be offered as joint awards e.g. with the MRC.</p> <p>They may be subject to a two stage application process.</p>

3.5 PhD Studentships

Purpose	PhD studentships are designed to encourage the best graduates to embark on a research career related to coeliac disease and/or the impacts of gluten.
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be hosted in an institution that has the appropriate infrastructure, support

	<p>and expertise to encourage and nurture a future career working in this field</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must align with our Research Strategy • Student must have a minimum 2:1 class honours degree or equivalent
Funding	£80k (to include institution fees)
Maximum duration	36 months
Review criteria	Refer to the guide for peer reviewers
Other notes	<p>PhD Fellowships are awarded to the prospective supervisor of the project.</p> <p>Joint funding with an institution is encouraged.</p>

3.6 Coeliac UK and Crohn's and Colitis UK jointly funded epidemiology research grant

Purpose	<p>The primary objective is to determine latest figures for the prevalence and incidence of coeliac disease, dermatitis herpetiformis, gluten ataxia, Crohn's Disease, Ulcerative Colitis and Microscopic Colitis within the UK.</p> <p>The secondary objective is to look at coeliac disease and commonly linked comorbidities and linked conditions.</p>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal investigator must be based in the UK but co-applicants can be based anywhere in the world • The principal investigator or a co-applicant must have a track record of excellence in epidemiology.
Funding	max. £XXk
Maximum duration	12 months
Review criteria	<p>Refer to the guide for peer reviewers</p> <p>Coeliac UK's Research Awards Panel will have representation from Crohn's and Colitis UK.</p> <p>Applications will not be reviewed by Coeliac UK's Member Review Panel.</p>
Other notes	<p>The administration process for this call will be managed by Coeliac UK. Please contact research@coeliac.org.uk with any queries.</p>

3.7 Sponsored dissertations

Purpose	The primary objective is to place coeliac disease, on the research agenda of UK academic institutions, whilst commissioning research that supports the charity's research priorities.
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available to post graduates • Must be hosted by a UK university or NHS institution • Must align with our Research Strategy • Favourable that it underpins one the charity's research priorities
Funding	≤ £5000
Maximum duration	12 months
Review criteria	All applications will be reviewed by the Charity's Evidence and Policy team. Where necessary they will be referred to the Chair of the Research Strategy Board and/or the Research Awards Panel.
Other notes	<p>Sponsored dissertations are awarded to the prospective supervisor of the project.</p> <p>A call for sponsored dissertations usually takes place annually, in September. Up to two sponsored dissertation awards may be considered each year.</p>

4 The application process

4.1 When Coeliac UK has funds available for research, the grant type, funds available, application process and timeline will be displayed on its website:
<https://www.coeliac.org.uk/our-research/for-researchers/>

4.2 Interested parties are advised to read all of the information provided carefully and to ensure they understand the application process, the scope of the call and deadlines. Incorrect or late applications will not be considered.

4.3 Coeliac UK operates two different application processes;

A one stage application process

Applicants are invited to submit a full project proposal for review, by a specified deadline, including full financial details. Following a review by whichever review process is relevant to the specific funding call, applicants will be notified if the project has been selected for funding or not.

A two stage application process

Applicants are first invited to submit an application form containing essential information only, including an approximate cost for the full project and a research proposal 'concept notes' up to a maximum of 1200 words. 'Concept notes' are reviewed (see below) and successful applicants are invited to submit a full project proposal including a detailed breakdown of finances.

5 The review process

- 5.1 Unless otherwise mentioned, all applications will be reviewed by Coeliac UK's Research Awards Panel, at least two external peer reviewers and a lay Member Review Panel. For the epidemiology call, at least one representative observer from Crohn's & Colitis UK will be present during RAP meetings.
- 5.2 Applications will be scored and judged on their relevance, originality, feasibility, overall scientific and/or clinical quality and their value for money. Reviewers are also asked to consider and comment on the expertise of the team to carry out the proposed project and PPIE, where relevant.
- 5.3 The Research Awards Panel will also judge applications against Coeliac UK's Research Strategy, including the research priorities.
- 5.4 Applicants are encouraged to recommend peer reviewers (with no conflict of interest) and may request exclusion of a peer reviewer due to a conflict of interest or issue around disclosure of confidential information.
- 5.5 All applicants will be informed of the outcome and may receive copies of anonymised reviewers' comments and a report which will provide insight into the Panel's decision.
- 5.6 Where a two stage application process is employed, stage one applications do not undergo external peer review. Stage one applications are reviewed by Coeliac UK's Research Awards Panel and if necessary additional members may be co-opted to the Panel. Stage two applications undergo external peer and lay review as above.

6 Resubmission policy

- 6.1 Unless otherwise stated, applications which are not awarded funding are permitted to be resubmitted to an applicable future call at the discretion of the Research Award Panel.

7 Finance and costs (no funding of full economic costs)

- 7.1 Our grants can cover the costs of materials, laboratory services and staff specifically employed in the research. We will not pay for organisational overheads such as rent, heating, administrative support etc.
- 7.2 All costs and their justification must be provided in the 'Financial details of support requested' within a full application.

8 Co-funding applications

- 8.1 Coeliac UK is open to co-funding projects. Applicants should include information about any potential co-funder and the amount available within the application form.

9 Use of animals

- 9.1 Any applicant intending to use animals in their research must address the 3Rs (replacement, refinement, reduction of animals in research). For further information on the 3Rs please visit: <http://www.nc3rs.org.uk/the-3rs>
- 9.2 Within the application form, applicants are required to demonstrate how they

have considered avoidance of the use of animals (replacement), minimised the number of animals per experiment (reduction), minimised suffering and improved animal welfare (refinement).

- 9.3 Please refer to Coeliac UK's statement around the use of animals in research www.coeliac.org.uk/animalresearch

10 Use of human tissue (Human Tissue Authority - HTA)

- 10.1 Any applicant intending to use human tissue must confirm within their application that their practice will comply with the appropriate legislation and follow the relevant codes of practice issued by the Human Tissue Authority (HTA). The type of tissue and quantity must be justified.

11 Writing an excellent 'concept note'

- 11.1 If you are applying for a two stage process, your 'concept note' is extremely important, as it will be a standalone representation of your research proposal and this alone will determine if you are invited to submit a full proposal to stage two.
- 11.2 The concept note should be no more than 1200 words, excluding diagrams or images. Diagrams and images may be submitted in addition to the word count but must not exceed 5 in total.
- 11.3 The concept note may include:
- The aim of the project
 - Hypotheses
 - The unmet need/evidence gap/reason the research is important
 - A brief background/link to any previous research
 - Intended outcomes
 - Estimation of cost (essential)

12 Writing an excellent lay summary

- 12.1 Your lay summary is extremely important, as it will be given as a standalone representation of your research proposal to our Member Review Panel (people diagnosed with coeliac disease and their carers), where it will be scored and the results combined with those of the external peer reviewers.
- 12.2 The Member Review Panel will be asked if they have understood your lay summary, whether they feel the research will benefit people with coeliac disease and whether the research should be funded.
- 12.3 The lay summary should include:
- The aim of the project
 - Why this research is needed
 - How this research will benefit people with coeliac disease
 - Which of the charity's research priorities are supported by this research
 - How you will carry out the research
 - What this research might potentially lead to in the future
 - How the results will be disseminated
 - Details on any patient and public involvement in the research

12.4 For further information on writing a good lay summary, please visit:

- Plain English campaign: www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides