**Tuberous Sclerosis Association**

**TSC Registry and Longitudinal Data PhD Studentship**

**Guidance for Applicants**

Table of Contents

[1. Introduction 2](#_Toc210159749)

[2. Type of funding 3](#_Toc210159750)

[2.1. Who can apply 3](#_Toc210159751)

[2.2. Value and length of award 3](#_Toc210159752)

[2.3. Remit 3](#_Toc210159753)

[3. Timeline 4](#_Toc210159754)

[4. Assessment process 4](#_Toc210159755)

[4.1. Triage 4](#_Toc210159756)

[4.2. External Peer Review 4](#_Toc210159757)

[4.3. Research Committee Assessment and Funding Decision 5](#_Toc210159758)

[5. Eligibility 7](#_Toc210159759)

[5.1. Submission and review 7](#_Toc210159760)

[5.2. Lead applicant 7](#_Toc210159761)

[5.3. Staff members/employees 7](#_Toc210159762)

[5.4. Collaborators 8](#_Toc210159763)

[5.5. Ethics 8](#_Toc210159764)

[6. Application guidance 9](#_Toc210159765)

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**Guidance for Applicants**

## 1. Introduction

Our goal is to ensure that everyone affected by TSC gets the support, care, and research advancements they need and should expect – now and also in the future. The Tuberous Sclerosis Association (TSA) is proud of our long-standing history of being a world-leader in funding important research into causes, diagnosis, management and treatment for Tuberous Sclerosis Complex (TSC).

The TSA’s Research Strategy focuses on accelerating progress towards providing help for today and a cure for tomorrow. We are committed to maximising the impact of our research by investing more in areas where it can achieve the greatest outcomes. Our updated strategy outlines three priority areas: Lifetime impact, Treatments and Optimising care.

**We strongly recommend familiarising yourself with the TSA Research Strategy:** [**http://tuberous-sclerosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/TSA-Research-Strategy-2025-2028.pdf**](http://tuberous-sclerosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/TSA-Research-Strategy-2025-2028.pdf)

## 2. Type of funding

### 2.1. Who can apply

Studentships can be applied for by academics either intending to run an application process for PhD Studentships within usual University processes, or for postgraduates of high academic calibre already identified within their University.

Applicants must be associated with an established researcher/sponsor in a university department or similar research environment. Applications will be judged on the quality of the research proposal, the quality of the candidate (if already named), the sponsor, the supervisor and the training provided.

### 2.2. Value and length of award

* Maximum award: £55,000
* Duration: 3 years

**Secured match funding is required for applications to be considered.**

### 2.3. Remit

The remit of the TSC Registry and Longitudinal Data PhD Studentship is to support a postgraduate researcher of high academic calibre working under the supervision of academics with a recognised track record in TSC research. This commissioned call has been established by the TSA Board of Trustees to initiate and shape the development of a TSC registry by gathering, organising and analysing longitudinal data. Projects must draw on information from primary, secondary and tertiary medical records to build a comprehensive picture of the clinical pathways, health needs and long-term outcomes of people with TSC. Proposals should show how the studentship will generate insights that lay the groundwork for an enduring registry resource and support the organisation’s emerging research priorities. Match funding is a requirement of the award, and applications should clearly outline supervisory arrangements, institutional or partner commitments, and the feasibility of data access, governance and linkage.

## 3. Timeline

Call opens: **Wednesday 1 October**

Application submission deadline: **Monday 1 December 13:00 GMT**

Funding decision: **January 2026**

Anticipated start date: **February 2026**

## 4. Assessment process

### 4.1. Triage

All applications will first undergo an initial triage by TSA staff to ensure:

* Completeness of documentation
* Compliance with application guidance, terms and conditions, and funding thresholds
* Adherence to formatting and submission requirements

Where minor issues are identified, applicants will be contacted and given an opportunity to make the necessary amendments within an agreed timeframe. TSA reserves the right to reject applications that cannot or will not be corrected within this period.

For applications that significantly deviate from the requirements or raise scientific concerns, TSA staff will consult with two scientific members of the Research Committee. Applicants may again be asked to amend their submission, but the TSA reserves the right to reject the application if advised by the scientific reviewers.

This triage stage ensures that all applications progressing to external peer review are complete, compliant, and ready for fair scientific assessment.

### 4.2. External Peer Review

Applications that pass the initial project triage will proceed to external peer review. This process will be facilitated by TSA staff and overseen by scientific members of the TSA Research Committee to ensure fairness and alignment with our strategic priorities.

As a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC), the TSA adheres to AMRC’s best-practice principles for peer review, including transparency, independence, and the use of expert reviewers with relevant scientific expertise.

External reviewers will assess your application against the following criteria:

* The overall potential for impact that will improve the lives of people living with TSC; those affected directly, along with their family members and carers
* Impact leading to wider research, including social, economic and health sector benefits
* The quality of the application and study protocol
* The level of innovation in the study
* The strength and track record of the researchers; in the case of emerging researchers evidence of promise of the candidate’s research trajectory
* Value for money
* Plans to ensure that people living with TSC; those affected directly including their family members and carers are at the centre of the study, throughout the duration of the study
* The strength of plans to communicate and disseminate the findings of research to other research professionals, as well as the lay TSC community

Where significant concerns or critical comments are raised, applicants will be given the opportunity to submit a rebuttal or clarification before final assessment by the Research Committee.

All reviewer comments and applicant responses are considered confidential and are used solely for the purpose of informing funding decisions.

### 4.3. Research Committee Assessment and Funding Decision

Following external peer review, all applications will be considered by the TSA Research Committee, which includes both scientific and lay members. The committee will review peer reviewer comments, applicant rebuttals, and the overall proposal to assess:

* Scientific quality and feasibility
* Potential impact on the TSC community
* Alignment with the TSA Research Strategy
* Relevance to TSA’s mission and strategic priorities

Where the number of high-quality applications exceeds available funding, the committee will prioritise projects based on these criteria to ensure the greatest potential impact.

The Research Committee will then make funding recommendations to the TSA Board of Trustees, who have final authority for awarding grants. All applicants will be notified of the outcome following the Board’s decision.

## 5. Eligibility

### 5.1. Submission and review

* Each applicant must submit no more than one application for project funding as lead applicant
* Applicants may seek advice on the application process from the TSA before applications are submitted
* Once the application has been submitted, no additional unsolicited information intended to support the application will be accepted unless related to new legislative or regulatory change that will have a significant impact on the work undertaken
* Please complete and return your application form in Word format so that the information can be easily analysed
* Supporting documents can be returned in either Word or PDF format
* All applications should be emailed to: [research@tuberous-sclerosis.org](mailto:research@tuberous-sclerosis.org)

### 5.2. Lead applicant

* Senior researchers should be able to demonstrate evidence of a strong research record and should display evidence of leadership
* Emerging/early career researchers are encouraged to apply as lead applicants, and should outline how their research career to date shows promise and sufficient evidence of being able to lead a project to completion
* All lead applicants must be willing and able to agree to the Terms and Conditions if their application is successful

### 5.3. Staff members/employees

* If the staff member who will be supported by the grant has not yet been recruited or is unknown at this stage, please provide the title of the position to be filled. Further information must be provided as soon as possible after the award letter is issued
* There is no limit to the number of staff members that can be involved in the application, provided their salary costs can be covered by associated grants

### 5.4. Collaborators

There is no limit to the number of collaborators that can be involved in an application, but for each collaborator there must be a signed declaration letter on official letter headed paper which confirms they have consented to co-operate in the programme of research. It should also outline the reasons for collaborating and explain their role in the project.

### 5.5. Ethics

All appropriate regulatory approvals must either be in place before the work on the research commences or after the award has been granted.

If you are unsure whether your application meets the above eligibility criteria, please contact the TSA’s Research Team by emailing [research@tuberous-sclerosis.org](mailto:research@tuberous-sclerosis.org) or by calling the main switchboard on 0300 222 5737.

## 6. Application guidance

The following table explains the structure of the TSC Registry and Longitudinal Data PhD Studentship application form and offers guidance on the information to include in each section. *References are not included in the word count.*

**Please submit your application form as a Word document – this is required for correct processing of the application. Applications sent as PDF documents will not be processed.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Section | Guidance |
| Application summary | Please provide the requested information |
| 1. Abstract  Word count: <300 | Please provide a short scientific abstract of the research proposal.  The abstract should include:   * Background – please detail brief background information that is needed to understand the wider context of your application and accompanying documents. * Hypothesis and objectives * Methodology |
| 2. Lay summary  Word count: <300 | Please provide a plain language summary of the research proposed. This section may be shared publicly if the grant is awarded. We strongly encourage PPI in the production of this section which can be through the TSC Research Volunteer Network or otherwise.  You may wish to include:   * The aims and objectives of the project: the problem you are trying to address and how relevant it is to TSC and its associated conditions * What you are going to do without using scientific jargon * What you expect to come from the project * Details of how your project will involve people living with TSC and their families |
| 3. Value to TSC research  Word count: <300 | Please explain why you are proposing this research in plain language. Write with passion about the importance of your project, how it could help advance understanding of TSC or contribute towards new treatments, and how it connects to the mission of the TSA. This section may be shared publicly if the grant is awarded. We strongly encourage PPI in the production of this section which can be through the TSC Research Volunteer Network or otherwise.  You may wish to:   * Explain how the findings of your research will be of benefit to people living with TSC and their families and carers * The timescale to impact and reasons why |
| 4. PPIE  Word count: <300 | Please detail if and how people affected by TSC have been involved in shaping this research proposal and/or whether you have plans to engage or involve people affected by TSC, or members of the public, in your research? Please mention if you have involved a patient or member of the public in writing sections 2 and 3 of this application. For more information on PPIE, please see NIHR guidance here: <https://www.learningforinvolvement.org.uk> |
| 5.1. Background  Word count: <1000 words | Please detail the relevant background research to the proposed project. Outline the problem or unmet need, summarising the current evidence or knowledge gaps, and explaining why this project is necessary and timely. |
| 5.2. Research aims and objectives  Word count: <500 words | State the overarching aim and list the key research questions or objectives the project will address, ensuring they are specific and achievable within the remit. |
| 5.3. Methodology  Word count: <750 words | Describe the research design in enough detail to show feasibility, including participants or data sources, methods and procedures, data collection and analysis plans. |
| 5.4. Timeline  Word count: no limit | Describe the anticipated timeline of activities/milestones or project phases that shows how the work will progress over the funding period. This should include any details of departmental milestones such as upgrade examinations. You may wish to list bullet points or upload a Gantt chart. |
| 5.5. Expected outcomes and impact  Word count: <750 words | Explain what outputs or findings you expect to generate and how these could lead to meaningful scientific, clinical or patient impact in the short and longer term. |
| 5.6. Dissemination and knowledge sharing  Word count: <500 words | Describe how you will share results with relevant audiences – such as researchers, clinicians, patients and the public – and the formats and channels you will use. |
| 5.7. Sustainability and next steps  Word count: <500 words | Indicate how the findings could be sustained, developed, implemented or used to secure follow-on work after the funded period ends. |
| 5.8.1. Project staffing: lead applicant  Word count: no limit | Please outline the extent of the lead applicant’s engagement in the research project (e.g., grant holder/supervisor/actively engaged in research) including an estimate percentage of applicant time spent on the proposed project.  You must submit the lead applicants CV at the point of submission.  Please note, the lead applicant will be the main point of contact throughout the grant evaluation process and the project, should it be funded |
| 5.8.2. Project staffing: co-applicants  Word count: no limit | Please provide the requested details of any co-applicants. There is no limit to the number of co-applicants.  You must submit CVs of all co-applicants at the point of submission. |
| 5.8.3. Collaborations  Word count: no limit | Please details any current collaborators/industry partners relevant to the proposed research.  Please detail any additional collaborations or industry involvement that you wish to develop for this project. |
| 6. Regulatory approvals  Word count: no limit | Please provide the requested information. If relevant, please include a copy of any approval letters. If animals are to be used as part of the project, you should submit the ‘Proposed use of animals’ questionnaire at point of submission.  Please note that funds may not be released without all necessary approval in place. |
| 7. Breakdown of costs  Word count: no limit | Please provide a full, accurate breakdown of the costs requested, including justification of how the funds will be used.  Please note the following:   * Grants will be awarded in GBP only * VAT is not payable on any part of the grant * In accordance with AMRC policy, the Tuberous Sclerosis Association only funds the direct costs of the research * Further information, including quotations where necessary, may be requested as part of the review process |
| 8. Details of match funding  Word count: no limit | This funding stream requires match funding to be secured by the applicant ahead of the submission deadline. Please use this section to provide details of secured matched funding. |
| 9. Intellectual property and commercial considerations  Word count: no limit | Please provide the requested information. You may wish to contact your institutions/organisations technology transfer office to discuss this part of your application further. |
| 10. Referees  Word count: no limit | As part of this funding stream, applications will undergo external peer review. Here you have the opportunity to provide the details of suggested reviewers (please note that we are unable to guarantee those named will review your application) and the details of any reviewers who may be conflicted. Please note all reviewers will complete a conflict-of-interest declaration. |
| 11. Declaration | Please read and initial each statement. Please provide a signature and print your name and the date below. |
| 12. Application checklist | Please initial the boxes to confirm that the stated criteria have been met. |
| 13. Electronic submission | Details regarding submission: please ensure these are read thoroughly ahead of submitting your application. |

**If you have any questions regarding the Research Grants 2025/26, please contact research@tuberous-sclerosis.org.**