

Zakarian Awards 2025

Co-funded with our partner The Royal College of Ophthalmologists, up to £25,000 is available for up to one year, to fund a research project which allows College members to develop their research experience and skills which may lead to future opportunities.

- **Maximum funding:** £25,000
- **Duration:** 1 year
- **Deadline:** 18 June 2025

Further information

The Zakarian Awards are designed to support three categories of researchers:

- Ophthalmology trainees not in the IATS or other research training posts seeking to undertake research. Support can be sought for consumables, equipment and open access dissemination and for salary support to buy 'time out' from a training programme to undertake research.
- Consultants or SAS ophthalmologists holding NHS substantive contracts and without dedicated research time (PAs in job plan). Those holding academic posts/contracts are ineligible. Support can be sought for buying out time in the job plan for research, or for consumables or equipment to establish a research project.
- Academic Clinical Fellow (NIHR IATS ACF) Ophthalmology trainees seeking to prepare preliminary/pilot data to develop their proposed PhD projects and/or doctoral research training funding applications. Support can be sought for consumables, equipment and open access dissemination.

We are especially keen to support those without any or very limited prior research experience and/or those not in academic posts in order to help them get started in research, in line with RCOphth's position statement on [Ophthalmic Research By All](#).

Timeline

- Applications open – 9 April 2025
- Deadline - 18 June 2025
- Stage 1 outcome - August 2025
- Interviews (Stage 2 invited applicants) – 3 September 2025
- Funding outcome shared with applicants - September 2025

Success rates – 2024/25

- 71%

Stage 1

- 60%

Stage 2

Success rates - 2023/24

- 64%

Stage 1

- 43%

Stage 2

Eligibility

- Lead applicants must be members of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists.
- Applicants with no or limited prior research experience are especially welcome to apply.
- As this scheme is designed for ophthalmologists to gain research skills, the lead applicant should be carrying out most of the work.
- Proposals to 'top up' existing research funding are not eligible, but 'bolt-on' projects to a larger, existing piece of work are permitted.
- Lead applicants must be affiliated with UK academic or medical institutions
- The research must take place within the UK.
- Applications are limited to one per lead applicant.
- The Mentor (rather than the lead applicant) is required to have a contract of employment at the host institution which extends beyond the end date of the award.

Financial support

Funding is made in line with [AMRC's position statement on supporting research in universities](#).

- Applications can include costs for:
 - Buying "time out" of training programme or clinics
 - Consumables
 - Equipment essential for the project

- Animal costs
- Open access publication costs
- Conference costs
- Other expenses, such as PPIE or travel
- Applications cannot include costs for:
 - Maintenance of equipment
 - Recruitment costs
 - Indirect costs
 - Non-attributable overhead costs

Application process

All applications must be submitted via Fight for Sight's Grant Tracker system. New applicants must register for an account to access the application form. Returning applicants can login to their existing account.

You must submit your application for approval by the stated deadline for your submission to be processed.

Your application will require **approval from two authorised signatories of the host institution** (Head of Department and Finance Office) following application submission on grant tracker. We allow 48 hours (two days) from the deadline for approvals. It is recommended to seek the appropriate signatories as early as possible, as these must be added when you submit your application. Please consider any annual leave and double check email addresses, as applications with outstanding approvals 48 hours past the deadline will not be processed.

[Go to Grant Tracker](#)

Review process

Fight for Sight is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) and follows their [guidelines for best practice in peer review](#).

Zakarian Awards involve a two-step process.

Applications will be scored by up to three people who are either members of the Research Grants Assessment Panel (RGAP) or representatives from the Royal College of Ophthalmologists.

To ensure that we fund the highest quality research, applicants must pass a minimum quality threshold as determined by the Panel. These applicants will be invited to interview (stage 2).

The Panel will make recommendations to Fight for Sight's Social Impact and Scientific Research (SISR) Committee on which applications are fundable with RCOphth's approval. SISR will consider the Panel feedback and strategic interests of the charity when making the final funding decision.

Outcomes and feedback will be shared with all applicants.

The following review criteria across three key themes are used when considering the application:

Key theme 1: Scientific merit

Category 1: Project

- An important, clear and focused research question, which is hypothesis driven and/or a PICO question
- Achievable in the timeframe
- Adequate and appropriate methods for the research question
- Evidence to support the feasibility of the project
- Adequate and appropriate plans for the evaluation of research outcomes, including a sample size / power calculation

Category 2: Research team and environment

- A research team with suitable experience and expertise evidenced by a good track record that will contribute to the project's success
- A research environment with the appropriate facilities and resources

Category 3: Governance

- Appropriate consideration for risks, budget and ethics

Key theme 2: Importance of research

Category 1: Addressing unmet need driven by public involvement

- Identification of an important, clear unmet need
- Public involvement in the development of the research proposal, involvement plans throughout the project and engagement plans upon completion
- Realistic outline of pathway to potential benefit for people with or at risk of sight loss

Category 2: Potential for progress

- Avoiding duplication of existing or ongoing work
- Clear pathway to impact

- Likelihood of significant new understanding or evidence

Key theme 3: Capacity building

Category 1: Training and opportunities

- Focus on training and development
- Support from research team and environment

Category 2: Future in vision research

- Demonstrated interest in remaining, becoming, or training a vision researcher
- Clear next steps for future studies and funding