

Guidance for Completing NES PhD Studentships & Pump Priming Grant Application 2025/2026

This document provides guidance for applicants to National Eczema Society (NES) research funding schemes for 2025/26:

Pump-Priming Grants (6–12 months, feasibility and proof-of-concept studies).

PhD Studentship Awards (3- years, training and research capacity-building).

NES funds research that directly benefits people with eczema, supports early career researchers, and aligns with our Research Strategy. All applicants should carefully read this guidance before submitting.

Section 1: Project Title and Principal Investigator/s & Co-Investigator/s*

Provide complete and accurate contact details. Ensure the Principal Investigator (PI) is the primary contact responsible for the project delivery.

Pump-Priming: PI must be employed at a recognized UK host institution (e.g. University, NHS Trust, Research Institution).

PhD: Supervisory team details must be included; if a named student is proposed, please provide a reference letter.

Section 2: Lay Summary of Proposed Studentship & Graphical Abstract* (Max 300 words)

Concise, descriptive, engaging. Avoid jargon.

- Write in plain English for a non-specialist audience (patients, carers, public).
- Explain: the problem, why it matters, what you will do, potential benefits for people with eczema.

Graphical abstract (diagram/infographic) is optional but encouraged. Uploaded as a separate uploaded document (JPEG, PNG, or PDF).

Graphs, charts, and images should be prepared in a clear and accessible format. Please ensure:

- Minimum resolution of 300 dpi (suitable for screen and print).
- All text and labels are legible at standard viewing size.
- Colours are chosen with accessibility in mind (e.g., avoid red/green combinations that may be difficult for colour-blind readers; consider using patterns, textures, or symbols in addition to colour).
- Where appropriate, provide a short descriptive caption so that visuals are understandable without specialist knowledge.

Section 3: Research Objectives and Rationale (Max 300 words)

- State clear, specific, measurable objectives.
- Justify why this research matters to eczema patients and health services.
- Identify the evidence gap your project addresses.

Recommend bullet points or numbered objectives to improve clarity and reviewability.

Section 4: Methods (Max 1000 words)

(Pump-Priming: 800 words | PhD: 1,000 words)

- Design: Describe study type and why it is appropriate.
- Population/Sampling: Define target groups, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and diversity considerations (e.g. skin of colour, socio-economic background, age).
- Data Collection & Analysis: Tools, instruments, procedures, and analysis plan.
- Ethics & Governance: Indicate required approvals (REC, HRA, MHRA, IRAS).
- Gantt chart (or equivalent project timeline): Attach a Gantt chart/milestones.
- PhD Only: 3-year timeline with milestones.

This is a critical section. Include just enough detail to convey rigor, without being overly technical.

You may attach a separate Gantt chart and/or Gantt chart (or equivalent project timeline) as PNG, JPEG or PDF and schematic/graphic images to further clarify your methods section up to 4 separate labelled images in addition to Gantt/Gantt chart (or equivalent project timeline).

Section 5: Supervision, Training Environment and Career Development (Max 400 words)

Applicants for PhD Studentship must provide clear information on the supervisory arrangements, training opportunities, and career development support that will be in place for the PhD student.

Supervisory Arrangements and Expertise

- List supervisory team members, their relevant expertise, and specific roles.
- Provide short CVs (max 2 pages, double-sided, (4 pages total) per supervisor) as appendices.
- Confirm contingency supervision plans (alternative supervisory arrangements if needed).

Training Opportunities

- Outline how the student will be supported in developing professional skills such as:
 - Scientific writing and presentation.
 - Communication and public engagement.
 - Grant writing, leadership, and project management.
 - Networking through conferences, collaborations, and peer groups.

Research Culture & Institutional Commitment

- Describe how the host institution will foster a positive, inclusive research culture.
- Address mentorship, student wellbeing, and access to peer support networks.
- Confirm compliance with the UKRI Concordat to Support Research Integrity and commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).

Career Progression Pathways

- Explain how the studentship will prepare the candidate for a sustainable career in eczema research or related health fields.
- Highlight opportunities to engage with a range of career pathways (e.g. academia, clinical research, healthcare policy, industry, patient advocacy).
- Outline mentorship, networking, or placement opportunities that will support long-term career development and employability.

NES expects applicants to show how the studentship will both advance eczema research and support the student's progression into a successful and impactful career.

Section 6. Patient and Public Involvement (PPIE) & Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

(Max 300 words)

- Describe how people with eczema, carers, and advocacy groups will be involved in design, delivery, and dissemination.
- Show how you will ensure diverse and inclusive representation.
- Engagement with the NES Expert by Experience (EXEC) Group is strongly encouraged.

Design

- How patients/carers will help shape research questions, study design, and recruitment approaches.
- Example: co-developing participant information materials to ensure clarity and accessibility.

Delivery

- Roles for patients and carers during the project (e.g. advisory panels, co-applicants, supporting recruitment, interpreting findings).
- Example: involving carers in co-creating outcome measures or study tools.

Dissemination

- How results will be shared in accessible and meaningful ways.
- Example: co-producing plain-English summaries, infographics, blogs, or short videos for the eczema community.

Embedding EDI Principles

Applicants should demonstrate how they will ensure inclusive and representative involvement by:

- Recruiting diverse eczema populations (e.g. skin of colour, children, older adults, different socio-economic backgrounds).
- Making engagement activities accessible (e.g. flexible timing, remote options, childcare reimbursement, interpreters).

- Using culturally sensitive approaches and materials.

NES expects applicants to ensure that patient and public involvement is meaningful, inclusive, and impactful, and that diverse perspectives are embedded throughout the research lifecycle.

Section 7: Budget and Justification

Applicants must complete the budget table provided in the application form and include clear justification for each cost category.

- Pump-Priming Grants: modest research costs only; equipment up to £5,000; small RA/technician support (≤ 0.2 FTE, max 12 months). PI/co-I salary costs are not eligible.
- PhD Studentships: stipend and fees (UKRI domestic rates), reasonable research costs, training, conferences, and PPIE expenses. Large infrastructure or capital costs are not eligible.

All costs must be fully justified. For example:

- Staff: describe role and why essential.
- Equipment: justify need and confirm no duplication with existing resources.
- Travel: explain purpose and benefit to project delivery.

Value for Money Statement (Required for all submissions.)

Applicants must include a short statement (1–2 paragraphs) demonstrating how the award represents good use of NES funds. This should:

- Show proportionality and necessity of requested costs.
- Highlight any leveraged or matched contributions (e.g. institutional support, fee waivers, co-funding, in-kind resources).
- Explain how outputs and impact will deliver value for money for people with eczema.
- Show how the award will build sustainability and enable future funding or research opportunities.

NES will prioritise proposals that combine high scientific quality with efficient, responsible use of charitable funds.

Section 8: Impact, Dissemination and Knowledge Exchange (Max 500 words)

- Pump-Priming: focus on short-term outputs (datasets, pilot evidence, tools, methods, proof-of-concept, abstract/publication).

- PhD: include academic outputs, training outcomes, and impact for patients, clinicians, policy, and services.
- All: commit to accessible outputs (plain-English summaries, infographics, webinars).
- Co-creation with NES Expert by Experience (EXEC) group is expected.

Section 9: Sustainability, Strategic Fit and Next Steps (Max 300 words)

- Pump-Priming: describe how findings will support larger grant applications (name target funders/schemes, timelines).
- PhD: explain how studentship builds capacity, supports career progression, and underpins future research.

Section 10. Risk & Mitigation

Identify main risks (scientific, operational, ethical, financial) and how they will be managed.

- Pump-Priming: include a mandatory go/no-go milestone (month 3–6).
- PhD: include a contingency supervision plan (alternative supervisory arrangements).

Section 11: Head of Department/Line Manager Confirmation

A letter/email from Head of Department must confirm:

- Protected time for applicant/student.
- Access to facilities, equipment, and administrative support.
- Alignment with departmental research strategy.
- For PhD: contingency supervision arrangements.

Submission Checklist

- All sections of the application form completed
- Budget table completed and justified
- Letter/email of support from HoD attached
- Completed Application submitted by the deadline
- Optional – Graphical Abstract
- Optional – Gantt chart (or equivalent project timeline)/Gantt Chart
- Optional – Schematic/Image/Diagram of Methods (up to 4 separate labelled images).