BRITISH ACADEMY OF CHILDHOOD DISABILITY AND CASTANG FOUNDATION

BACD-Castang Fellowship Programme

Guidance Notes

Round 5

2027

The British Academy of Childhood Disability (BACD) and the Castang Foundation are pleased to announce Round 5 of the BACD-Castang Fellowship Programme for 2027.

BACD and the Castang Foundation support UK research that includes children and young people with neurodisability and their families. We are working together to fund multidisciplinary Fellowships that will aim to build childhood neurodisability academic capacity.

BACD operates as a specialty group of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and as the UK branch of the European Academy of Childhood Onset Disability. Our aims include encouraging debate and promoting research into outstanding questions in childhood disability. The Castang Foundation is a charity that funds UK neurodevelopment and neurodisability research.

This guidance document describes the aims of the Fellowship, how to apply to the programme, and how applications will be assessed.

The BACD – Castang Fellowship Programme

The BACD-Castang Fellowship Programme is led by the multidisciplinary BACD Strategic Research Group (SRG) and funded by the Castang Foundation.

The aims of the BACD SRG are:

1. To identify and encourage high-quality UK research in childhood neurodisability, in particular collaborative multidisciplinary projects.
2. To encourage and assist people in the field – including families, young people, clinicians, practitioners, researchers, and other stakeholders – to identify research priorities.
3. To facilitate and support the development of major research applications to Wellcome, Medical Research Council, National Institute for Health and Care Research, and national charitable funding bodies.
4. To encourage and help clinicians, practitioners, researchers, and educators to participate in research and potentially pursue a career path in childhood neurodisability research.

The BACD-Castang Fellowship Programme addresses the 3rd and 4th SRG aims and represents a substantial commitment to building multidisciplinary research capacity in childhood neurodisability in the United Kingdom. Fellowship awards will be made following open competition and the SRG will aim to achieve a balance of professionals from different disciplines and at different levels of seniority.

Fellowship aims, outputs, and content

The BACD-Castang Fellowship Programme aims to identify, support, and develop UK childhood neurodisability research leaders.

Over the course of the Fellowship, successful candidates will:

1. Generate specific, agreed outputs that advance their own childhood neurodisability research programme, BACD strategic research priorities, and nationally agreed research priorities within the childhood neurodisability community.[1]
2. Develop their skills in leading childhood neurodisability research.
3. Develop their identity, confidence, and national and international profile as a childhood neurodisability research leader.
4. Develop their knowledge of research funders' priorities and expectations.

Successful candidates will generate two key outputs:

1. An application for a research funding award in childhood neurodisability, to be submitted by the end of the Fellowship (December 2027)[2] and for which the candidate is the Primary Investigator or lead applicant.
2. A first-author peer-reviewed publication of relevance to the candidate's submitted grant application, to be under review by the end of the Fellowship.

[1] For example, research priorities agreed within James Lind Alliance Priority Setting Partnerships.
[2] Or under preparation for submission, in line with the research funder's timelines.

Successful candidates will bring their own interests, ideas, and defined research topics to the Fellowship. These should be highlighted in their individual applications. Candidates' research topics will collectively form the basis of a targeted development programme throughout the Fellowship. The programme includes:

- Individual mentoring from a member or collaborator of the BACD SRG.[3]
- Interactive learning workshops about key childhood neurodisability research topics, methodologies, and funding streams.
- An intensive grant sprint experience, where candidates iteratively present and develop their grant applications with support from expert clinicians, practitioners, methodologists, and BACD-Castang Fellowship peers.[4]
- Multidisciplinary networking with experienced childhood neurodisability researchers and collaboration with BACD-Castang Fellowship peers.
- National opportunities to disseminate Fellowship outputs and raise their professional profile within the childhood neurodisability research community.

Fellowships are available to candidates from a relevant professional discipline (i.e. within neurodisability-related health care, education, social care, or research). Fellowships include financial support up to the value of £1,000 for each successful candidate. Castang Foundation funding will be held and administered by BACD and will be used to support candidates' standard class travel to Fellowship events, entry to the BACD Annual Scientific Meeting in 2027, and accommodation and subsistence for the events and Annual Meeting. Unused funds will be retained by BACD.

You can read more about previous BACD-Castang Fellows here.

Eligibility

Round 5 of the BACD-Castang Fellowship Applications includes two types of awards, both of which are open to UK-based multidisciplinary candidates:

(1) Pipeline Fellowship – for candidates who want to secure a funded PhD/MD award:

- For applicants at different stages of their clinical/practice career, ranging from relatively newly qualified to well-established clinicians and practitioners. Or applicants from an academic, teaching, or research background (i.e. non-clinicians / non-practitioners).
- For applicants who want to secure a pre-doctoral funding award or equivalent (e.g. an NIHR Pre-doctoral Clinical and Practitioner Academic Fellowship).
- For candidates who want to secure a doctoral funding award or equivalent (e.g. funded MD).
- Candidates must be a BACD member or be committed to becoming a BACD member if their Fellowship application is successful.

[3] Applies only to candidates without an established mentoring relationship.
[4] For one example of a grant sprint, please see: https://sph.umich.edu/cehr/resources.html

(2) Advanced Fellowship – for research-experienced candidates who want to secure their next award:

- For applicants who are close to finishing their PhD or MD (i.e. submitting within the next 6 months approximately) and who want to secure their next research funding award.
- For post-doctoral applicants in health, social care, or education settings, or universities or other settings, who want to secure their next research funding award.
- For research-experienced applicants (with or without a PhD or MD) with strong early-career researcher CVs who want to secure their next research funding award.
- For established researchers, or clinical/practitioner academics, or educators with experience in leading research, who want to secure their next funding award and/or re-work funding applications that have not yet been successful.
- Candidates must be a BACD member or be committed to becoming BACD member if their Fellowship application is successful.

Our goal is to identify and encourage people from diverse professional backgrounds with the potential, intention, and commitment to lead UK research in childhood neurodisability. We aim to be inclusive and to grow the childhood neurodisability research community. Please do get in touch if you're not sure about your eligibility or whether one of these awards is for you.

Applicants are welcome to contact Jennifer.McAnuff1@nhs.net or Jeremy.Parr@ncl.ac.uk with any queries.

Assessment criteria

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria – please ensure you directly address these points in your application CV and cover letter:

- The candidate's qualifications, substantive employment, and (where appropriate given candidates' experience and employment situation) their research achievements to date. Note that an extensive research track record is not an essential requirement, particularly for the Pipeline Fellowship. Applicants will be judged on their merit and their potential trajectory as well as their deliverables to date.
- The candidate's specific priorities around what they individually want from the Fellowship programme.
- The candidate's future research aspirations, ambitions, and goals, including the interests, ideas, and defined research topic on which they plan to focus throughout the Fellowship.
- The relevance of the candidate's research topic to BACD strategic research priorities and nationally agreed research priorities within the childhood neurodisability community.
- The difference the Fellowship opportunity would make to the candidate.
- The candidate's support from their institution, including how they would leverage the Fellowship to maximise their institutional support.
- For the Pipeline Fellowship, submission of a strong organisational reference in support of the candidate's future potential as a childhood neurodisability researcher and indicating organisational support for the candidate's development.
- For the Advanced Fellowship, submission of a strong senior academic reference in support of the candidate's track record and future potential as a childhood neurodisability research leader.

How to apply

Applications should be made on the BACD-Castang Fellowship application form which can be found here. This consists of:

- A short, targeted CV: one A4 page including key research interests (topics and methods), academic / professional qualifications and achievements, current and most recent relevant employment, most relevant papers/outputs, most relevant grants/funding awards, most relevant wider research activities/roles/examples of impact, and most relevant collaborations and networks. Please consider how the information provided relates to the assessment criteria and covering letter.
- A covering letter: no more than two A4 pages describing how the candidate meets the programme eligibility and assessment criteria.
- Reference: 1-2 A4 pages submitted alongside the application form on a separate document.

Applications should be completed in at least font size 11.

Candidates are required to attend all key dates (see below). Please do not apply if you cannot attend the March 2027 dates in Sheffield.

Support can be provided for Fellows requiring reasonable adjustments, or childcare costs. Please contact Jennifer.mcanuff1@nhs.net to arrange a discussion.

Applications should be received by email to Kelly.robinson@rcpch.ac.uk by no later than 1700 on 12 November 2026 – applications received after this time will not be considered.

Following the submission deadline, applications will be checked for eligibility and completeness and distributed to BACD SRG members for review. The SRG will assess all eligible and complete applications using the assessment criteria above. All unsuccessful candidates will be encouraged to contact BACD SRG for feedback after the funding decisions have been made.

Key dates

Launch of BACD-Castang Fellowship Round 5	21 September 2026
Submissions open	21 September 2026
Submission deadline	12 November 2026
Decisions and feedback sent out to candidates	By 20 November 2026
Five online workshops in January, February, June, September & December 2027	Week beginning 11 January 2027 Week beginning 1 February 2027 Remaining dates will be negotiated with successful applicants
Fellowship Grant Sprint Day 1	9 March 2027*
Fellowship Grant Sprint Day 2	10 March 2027*
BACD Annual Meeting	11 March 2027*
*In-person attendance in Sheffield is required (no on-line option will be available)	

Further information

Information about the BACD SRG and the BACD-Castang Fellowship Programme is available on the BACD website. Please direct any queries to Jennifer.McAnuff1@nhs.net or Jeremy.Parr@ncl.ac.uk