



WCRC Career Starter Award

Applicant Guidance

(May 2025)



What is the WCRC Career Starter Award?

The Wales Cancer Research Centre (WCRC) works in partnership across Wales to build research capacity, broker collaboration and deliver research-enabling activity. WCRC plays a key role in delivering the [All-Wales Cancer Research Strategy](#) (CReSt). CReSt defines Wales' areas of research strength, outlining six key themes in which we are particularly strong: precision and mechanistic oncology; immuno-oncology; radiotherapy; cancer clinical trials; palliative and supportive oncology; and population-based prevention, early detection, primary care and health services research.

The Career Starter Award has been designed to provide a starting point for highly motivated individuals coming to the end of a PhD, who are driven to pursue an independent research career in an area of cancer research that they are passionate about, with an alignment to one or more of the CReSt themes.

This award is intended to provide a platform whereby researchers can produce preliminary data, create models, or develop skills while they prepare and submit applications to secure follow-on funding for themselves. As such, it is a required outcome of the award that the applicant must have pre-identified a source of follow-on funding for their salary and demonstrate that the timelines of application and outcome will enable them to move seamlessly onto this funding if successful.

What research will be supported?

The intention of the Career Starter Award is to identify talented individuals at the end of their PhD who have a drive to progress to an independent cancer research career, and need a starting point towards this goal. Applicants will be responsible for proposing appropriate research titles to align with the cancer research area they intend to pursue, which must have a demonstrable relevance to one or more of the CReSt themes.

When applying, applicants must show that they have a clear vision for what they want to achieve during the funding period, and be able to demonstrate how this will be essential for them to progress their career as an independent researcher, for example: generating preliminary data, developing skills for future work. Applicants will also need to illustrate how the proposed work is distinct from, or how it builds on, their PhD.

Each applicant will be required to provide a supervisor's statement of support to demonstrate that their research proposal has the support of their HEI, and that their supervisor has capacity to host them.

What funding is available?

Between 6 and 12 months of salary funding is available. Salary will be awarded according to the applicant's host institution, at the standard banding for post-PhD positions:

- Cardiff University: Grade 6 (starting spine point); equivalent to Research Associate
- Swansea University: Grade 7 (starting spine point); equivalent to Research Assistant
- Bangor University: Grade 7 (starting spine point); equivalent to Research Officer

Please note that funds must be spent by February 2027.

A maximum of £5,000 of funding is available for project consumables for 12-month awards; this is pro-rated for awards of shorter duration.

This funding will not cover salary overheads; any costs relating to animal research; estates costs; any form of tuition fees; or conference attendance (unless presenting a poster or talk). If the applicant is unsure if their proposed consumables requirement would be covered, they are advised to contact wcrc@cardiff.ac.uk

Who is eligible to apply?

In order to apply for the Career Starter Award, applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Must be in a non-clinical position within a group within a Cardiff, Swansea or Bangor University
- Must have the support of a host supervisor to undertake the work within their lab or group
- Must have an institutional cost approval form confirming project feasibility and coverage of salary overheads by their HEI (instructions per institution are listed in the 'Required documents' list at the end of the guidance)
- *If they have not yet been awarded their PhD*, they must have submitted their thesis before this funding would begin
- *If they have already been awarded their PhD*, the PhD award date must have been no more than 12 months before the application deadline (exclusive of maternity/paternity or carer leave)



Required outputs

Applicants will need to pre-identify a target funding scheme as a source of follow-on funding for their salary, which they will be expected to apply for within the funding window. We therefore require applicants to allow enough time during the award funding period to hear the outcome of their follow-on funding application and/or have bridging funding in place.

WCRC also expects applicants to define additional outputs relevant to the project, such as (but not limited to): production of pilot work, creation of preliminary data, development of new models; acquisition of new skills, presentation of work at conferences, and publication of work in peer-reviewed journals.

Award holders will also be expected to participate in WCRC-led activities such as workshop days, or public engagement with science events; and will be required to provide quarterly updates for WCRC reporting.

Selection process

All applications will be screened for eligibility, then reviewed by our panel, comprising WCRC academic leads, the WCRC lay research partner, and Welsh University representatives. Panel members will review and score the applications, and the collective scores will inform the shortlist.

All shortlisted applicants will be invited to an interview, which will be held on **Thursday 4th September 2025**.

The applicants will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Qualifications, and evidence that the applicant has published in a national/international journal and/or presented at a national/international conference
- Support of their host institution – based on the supervisor's statement, approved cost forms, and application form
- Strength of applicant's plans for follow-on funding, and how this will lead to an independent research career, and the applicant's commitment to continuous professional development
- Research proposal's alignment to CReSt
- Scientific merit of the research proposal, the applicant's understanding of scientific research methods and analysis, and how this work fits into the wider picture of cancer research
- Feasibility of the application – based on funding duration requested, proposed outcomes and outputs, and scale of the work



Timeline

**Tuesday
10th June 2025**

Applications open

Applications close

Wednesday 30th July 2025
at 12:00 midday

Friday 22nd August 2025

Shortlisted applicants
invited to interview

Interviews

Thursday 4th September 2025

Friday 5th September 2025

Interviewed applicants
informed of outcome

Funding begins
(Month depends on
length of proposed
research and requested
start date)

October 2025 - August 2026

**Mid-way
Point**

Mid-way review point
with WCRC academics
for support, guidance,
and a progress check

How to apply

In order to apply, applicants must complete the documents defined below.

Required documents

Document	Details
Application form	The application form must be completed in full. Applicants can download the application form here .
Timeline of proposed activity	The timeline of proposed activity (max. 1 page of A4) should demonstrate: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expected milestones and timelines of the work• An overview of how they applicant expects to spend their time completing this work
Summary figure	The summary figure (max. 1 page of A4) may demonstrate: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An overview of the work the applicant intends to carry out• Any preliminary data they will use in this work• Any diagrammatic representation that helps explain the work they will deliver
CV	The applicant's CV must: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be no more than 2 pages of A4• Include all academic qualifications• Include current employment• Include any prizes or scholarships awarded to the applicant• Include a list of any publications on which the applicant is a named author
Supervisor's statement of support	The supervisor's statement of support must: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be signed and dated• Be no more than 1 page of A4• Illustrate the applicant's suitability for the award, and their motivation for the pursuit of an independent research career• Provide assurance that there is supervisor support as well as HEI support and availability of funds for overheads and any additional project costs that may be required• Confirm that the supervisor will be in position for the duration of the award
Institution's approved cost form	To provide assurances that institutional overheads and non-eligible costs will be covered by the applicant's host HEI, an approved institutional sign-off of proposed costs is required. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cardiff University: Approved Costing and Pricing (CAP) form or Worktribe equivalent• Bangor University: Approved Full Economic Costs (FEC) form• Swansea University: An approved report from Swansea University's Award Management System (AWS)

How to apply

Once all required documentation is complete, submit applications via email:

- To: wcrc@cardiff.ac.uk
- Deadline: **Wednesday 30th July 2025 at 12:00 (midday)**
- Subject line: WCRC Career Starter Award application
- Attachments: All required documents (see required document list above)

An application may be submitted in Welsh and will not be treated any less favourably than an application submitted in English.

Please note, new applications and/or updates to applications after the deadline will not be accepted. If you wish to withdraw your application for any reason following submission, please contact WCRC using the email address below.

If you have any questions or require further guidance, please contact wcrc@cardiff.ac.uk with 'Career Starter Award' in the subject line.

We look forward to receiving your application



Canolfan
Ymchwil
Cancer
Cymru

Wales
Cancer
Research
Centre

