

Registered Reports Funding Partnership Guidance for awardholders

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Introduction

Congratulations on your Cancer Research UK award!

Now your funding has been confirmed and you've opted-in to our registered reports funding partnership, we're pleased to enrol you into our pilot. This guide aims to provide you with more detailed information about what you can expect throughout the process.

We've launched our new pilot in collaboration with researchers at the University of Bristol and a consortium of 12 journals that you can choose to submit your work to:

- [BMC Medicine](#)
- [Cancer Medicine](#)
- [Cancer Reports](#)
- [Clinical Otolaryngology](#)
- [Communications Medicine](#)
- [Nature Communications](#)
- [Nature Human Behaviour](#)
- [Nature Methods](#)
- [PLOS Biology](#)
- [PLOS ONE](#)
- [Psycho-Oncology](#)
- [Scientific Reports](#)

Our pilot aims to encourage more researchers to submit registered reports. This is a publishing format that aims to make it easier to publish the results of research irrespective of the findings and provides the opportunity for you to receive valuable peer review feedback before a research study begins.

As this is a new process for our consortium, we are keen to learn and iterate. Please do share your reflections and feedback about how we can improve the process at policies@cancer.org.uk.

If you do not wish to continue with the pilot for any reason, please let us know as soon as possible.

Registered reports process

Below we'll outline how the process works, and what to expect at each step.

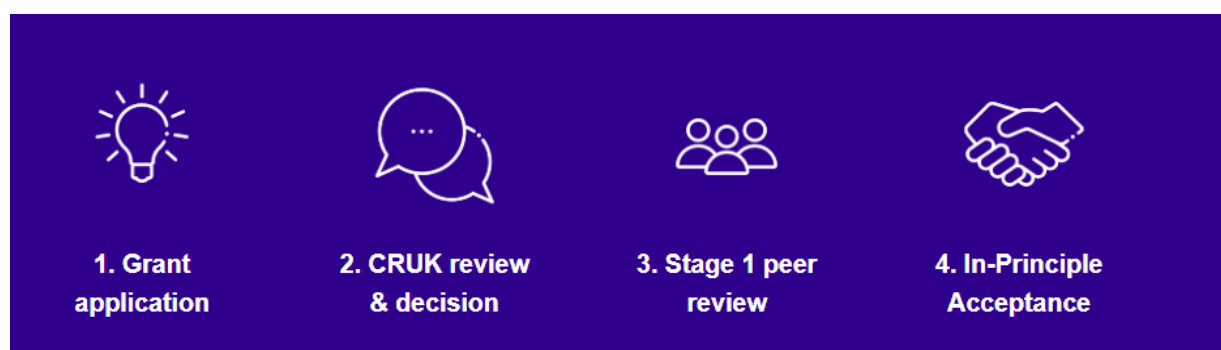
As a reminder, the registered reports process is very similar to the normal process of conducting research and getting it published, but with one main important change - it moves the initial manuscript submission and peer review earlier in the process before the research is conducted.

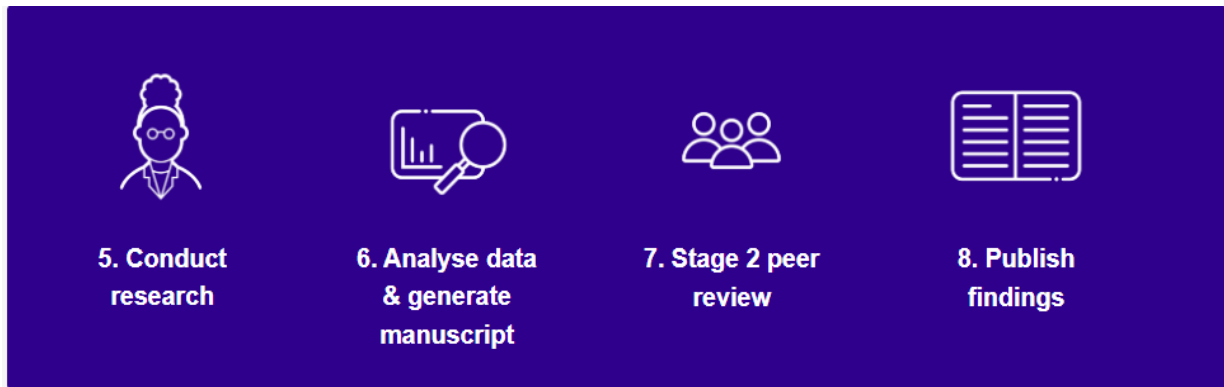
Here is an overview of how our process may differ from the 'typical' research and publishing pattern (but read the sections below for more details):

- You will need to submit a pre-submission enquiry to your chosen journal before starting the study.
- You must submit your stage 1 manuscript (i.e. study protocol) to the journal for peer review before conducting the research. You must wait to start recruiting for or conducting your study until this manuscript is peer reviewed and accepted by the journal.
- If you make any significant changes to your protocol during your study, you will need to get these approved by the journal editor.
- A final manuscript review process will occur at the same stage as a 'typical' publication (after the study is completed) but this will usually be a much simpler and easier process than normal peer review.

If you anticipate that your project will result in more than one empirical publication i.e., a research article with empirical results, you are welcome to submit more than one registered report as part of this scheme.

In the figure below we've outlined the 8 steps in our registered reports pilot process. Following your grant application and successful award, you're now already at step 3 of our process, stage 1 peer review.





Stage 1 peer review

Once you've been notified that your award has been successful, you can start thinking about preparing your stage 1 registered report. This can be done even before you've accepted your grant award letter from us.

Broadly speaking, a stage 1 registered report will include:

- background and/or an introduction
- research question(s)
- research hypotheses
- participant/sample details, where applicable. This should include recruitment approaches, randomisation
- research methods, including analysis plans

Remember, you'll need to wait for the in-principle acceptance for your stage 1 report before you can start your research project. If this poses a significant issue for the start date of your award, please do contact us to discuss accommodations to your award start date.

Pre-submission enquiry

Select one of the 12 journals participating in our pilot as your preferred journal. Complete and submit our short [pre-submission enquiry form](#) to your preferred journal to check the suitability of your research with that journal.

Outcome of pre-submission enquiry

If you are deemed to be eligible by your preferred journal, you can prepare and submit your stage 1 registered report.

If you are not eligible for your preferred journal, you can choose another journal to submit the pre-submission enquiry to.

Submission of stage 1 registered report

If you're invited to submit a stage 1 registered report, you should prepare and submit it according to the journal's requirements.

The journal will invite peer reviewers to review your stage 1 registered report following their standard review process. The benefit of additional peer review at this stage is that you may receive comments which will enhance your proposed study, at the stage when you are most easily able to implement them (e.g., no requests to run an additional experiment or change your control group after the study is already completed).

In-principle acceptance

If you receive a positive decision from the journal, you will receive an 'in-principle acceptance'. This means the journal agrees to publish your final article regardless of the results, as long as you follow the plan you proposed in your protocol.

Some of the journals in our pilot wait to publish the full publication (stage 1 and stage 2 combined in a single article or separately but linked) once you are finished with the study. Others will publish the stage 1 protocol and stage 2 report separately, at the time each is accepted for publication. Information on each journal's process is available on their website.

If the journal does not accept your submission, you are welcome to prepare a submission to any of the other journals in our consortium.

Alternatively, the journal may offer their in-house cascade to share your submission with other journals in their group. It's your decision whether to pursue this option.

Conduct research

Once you've received your in-principle acceptance, you can conduct your research study as usual.

If you find that you need to make changes to your study at this point (after your

stage 1 manuscript has been accepted), you should contact the journal editor who is handling your manuscript as soon as possible. Editors understand that sometimes changing your protocol is unavoidable or desirable, and they will work with you to agree on reasonable changes. Otherwise, if you make changes but do not contact the editor, your manuscript could be rejected at stage 2 submission.

Analyse data and generate manuscript

Once your research period has finished, you'll analyse your data and write up the results and conclusions of your study to create your stage 2 submission. For most journals, the stage 2 manuscript will look much like a full, 'typical' journal article – it will start with the protocol i.e., the stage 1 manuscript that already received in-principle acceptance), then add on the results and conclusions to create a full report. Some journals ask for only the results and discussion in stage 2 and publish this separately from the stage 1 manuscript, so it's important to check the journal's guidelines.

You can then submit your manuscript to the journal where you gained your stage 1 acceptance. Alternatively, it's your choice if you wish to submit your full manuscript to a different journal, this will not affect your funding. However, if you do so, it will not be labelled a registered report and will be considered the same as any other journal article.

When you write up your stage 2 report, you should follow the methods and analysis plan from stage 1, i.e., your protocol that received in-principle acceptance from the journal. You can add extra analyses at this stage, but you must clearly mark them as exploratory, and not part of your original registered plan.

Stage 2 peer review

At stage 2 peer review, pending quality checks and a sensible interpretation of the findings, the manuscript will be published regardless of the outcome of the study results.

Reviewers will review the manuscript only to check that you followed the agreed-upon methods from stage 1, and that your conclusions are justified given the data. Manuscripts cannot be rejected at this stage for not having 'interesting' enough results or conclusions, or for any objections to methodology or theory that were not brought up in stage 1. Most manuscripts are accepted at stage 2. In the unusual event that your manuscript is not accepted, you can still submit it as a normal

publication to any journal.

Publish findings

As per [our policy on open access](#), all our funded researchers are expected to publish open access

Evaluation of pilot

As part of our consortium, we're partnering with researchers at the University of Bristol to evaluate our pilot. The purpose of this evaluation is to understand the effectiveness of the process and the experiences of researchers. We'll use recommendations to improve our pilot and to inform other registered reports funding partnerships.

You may be invited by us or the University of Bristol to contribute to this evaluation.

Additional resources

- [Consortium journal summaries](#)
- [Pre-submission enquiry form](#)
- [Registered reports funding partnership webinar](#)
- [Registered report submission checklist](#)