BNA Scholars Programme

Get involved: Become a Scholar

Seven new BNA Scholars are selected each Spring to join the Programme and remain on it for three years. Our Scholars are talented and self-driven young neuroscientists from backgrounds currently underrepresented in neuroscience's senior career stages. If that sounds like you, and you're ready to supercharge your career, read on for more information on the Programme and how to apply.

Programme activities:

BNA Scholars are expected to participate fully in the Programme's three pillars, designed to accelerate and uplift careers:

1) Mentoring:

Once they enter the Programme, Scholars choose their own Mentor from a pool of applicants (comprising early career researchers, senior academics, and members of the charity and commercial sectors, many of whom are from underrepresented ethnic backgrounds themselves). After receiving training resources and co-producing a mentoring agreement that sets goals and obligations, Mentor-Scholar pairings meet regularly to review goals, problem-solve, and share connections.

Scholars are expected to arrange their own meetings with their Mentors (at least 4–6 per year). Meetings can be via videocall, telephone, or even in person where feasible.

Mentoring relationships vary in their focuses, but work on the Scholar's own priorities for their career development: discovering new career options, expanding their network, navigating particular pathways, or building their skills and experience. Ongoing feedback from both Scholars and Mentors reveals strong, impactful relationships that are building and accelerating careers.

> *"My Mentor is very well matched to me and has allowed me to see that my goals are achievable. My Mentor has a similar lived experience with me as they*

have similar identifiers to me that has allowed me to open up about some of my struggles in the Neuroscience sector but it has also given me a form of representation that I never had during my sixth form and undergraduate studies."
Margret Kadembo, BNA Scholar

2) BNA Membership:

BNA Scholars receive complimentary BNA membership for the duration of their three years on the Programme, and are expected to take advantage of the range of benefits that membership offers:

"During my poster presentation, I was provided with the opportunity for in-depth, one-on-one conversations that fostered a stimulating and reflective environment. It was a chance to get feedback, share ideas, and even spark new collaborations. Being a BNA Scholar has provided me with incredible opportunities to be part of this vibrant community dedicated to neuroscience research."
Dipa Begum, BNA Scholar

3) Cross-sector bespoke career development events:

Supporter Organisations from across all neuroscience sectors – academic, commercial/industrial, clinical and charitable – have partnered with us since the Programme's launch, and contribute to its calendar of opportunities.

Supporter-provided career development events provide involved and interactive opportunities for BNA Scholars to meet directly with specialist academic and commercial sector leaders and discuss cutting-edge research, discover how these organisations operate, and make long-lasting connections that can give them the advantage they need to fulfill their career potential in neuroscience.

Each year carries a fresh roster of opportunities (usually around 4 per year), spanning laboratory visits, scientific communications workshops, seminars, networking, complementary conference attendance, writing and presentation opportunities, and careers surgeries. These opportunities are fully-funded, including travel, accommodation and sustenance where required. The attendance of all BNA Scholars is expected at each opportunity, except for where prior commitments preclude it.

"The BNA Scholars Programme has been a huge benefit to me as I have been figuring out what career path I want to take. I have had so many opportunities to speak to people in different industries and gain wisdom from people who are further along in their careers. I've also had multiple opportunities to go to

prestigious conferences such as FENS and be in the same room as some of the smartest people in Europe."
Naana Owusu-Amoah, BNA Scholar

"I honestly enjoyed this [ECR Connect Day hosted by ARUK] so much! As an ECR you're always thinking 'what am I going to do next?', and this was a good way to understand the range of options that are out there! I'm really excited for us to attend events in the future provided by other BNA Supporters, so we can keep on building our careers in a way that works for us."
Margret Kadembo, BNA Scholar

Annual award cycle:

November: Scholar applications open
January: Scholar applications close
Mid-February: Scholar interviews
Late February: Mentor applications close for incoming cohort
March: Scholar cohort announced
April / May: Mentors matched with Scholars

Eligibility criteria:

To be eligible for the BNA Scholars Programme, applicants must:

1. intend to pursue a future career in neuroscience and/or the wider neuroscience sector; and
2. be ordinarily resident in the UK (i.e. your residence in the UK is *not* wholly or mainly for the purpose of receiving full-time education – you didn't move to the UK for educational purposes at the start of your course); and
3. be currently a final year Undergraduate student, Masters (including integrated Masters) student, PhD student, or an early career research technician/assistant at a UK or Irish university; and
4. meet at least two of the following criteria:
    a. you are of Black or Mixed Black, Bangladeshi or Mixed Bangladeshi, Pakistani or Mixed Pakistani ethnicity, or a member of the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showman or Boater communities; or
    b. you are from a low-income background, i.e. your combined parent/guardian household income is less than £40,000 a year; or
    c. you are in the first generation of your family to go to university (i.e. none of your parents, stepparents or guardians have attended university, or completed higher education qualifications); or

d. you are care experienced (for a period of more than 3 months); or
e. you have had caring responsibilities for 3 months or more occupying more than 10 hours per week; or
f. you are estranged from your parents/guardians; or
g. you have been considered as statutorily homeless and qualified for assistance under your local authority's 'main homelessness duty'; or
h. you are a refugee, stateless person, or asylum seeker, or been otherwise forcibly displaced within or outside your country of origin; or
i. you were in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) during your primary and/or secondary education; or
j. if a final year undergraduate, you are/were in receipt of more than the minimum levels of support detailed from your regional funding body in the most recent year during which you received finance for your current degree (see this webpage to find out how to check whether you meet this financial criterion); **or**
k. your main household earner's primary occupation is in one of the Social Mobility Commission categories below:
    i. technical and craft occupations such as: motor mechanic, plumber, printer, electrician, gardener, train driver
    ii. routine, semi-routine manual and service occupations such as: postal worker, machine operative, security guard, caretaker, farm worker, catering assistant, sales assistant, HGV driver, cleaner, porter, packer, labourer, waiter/waitress, bar staff
    iii. long-term unemployed (claimed Jobseeker's Allowance or earlier unemployment benefit for more than a year)

To ensure fairness in the selecting process, all application form data will be anonymised. The BNA Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group, chaired by the BNA President, assists in the initial Scholar shortlisting process, the interview process, and the mentor matching process.

Shortlisting and Interviews:

In addition to the eligibility criteria listed above, the below factors will also be considered when shortlisting applicants:

- Balanced geographical spread of the shortlisted applicants across the UK
- Applicants' ethnic groups, according to degree of lack of representation in UK neuroscience careers
- Applicants' socioeconomic background

- Overall balanced representation of the shortlisted applicants
- The potential degree of impact on an applicant's neuroscience career success, by them joining the Scholars Programme
- Applicants' need for and commitment to consistently engaging with the Programme's activities (mentor meetings, career development opportunities provided by the Programme's Supporter Organisations, and BNA meetings and activities such as the biennial Festival of Neuroscience)
- Applicants' commitment to the neuroscience community and working to strengthen it, e.g. by taking part in BNA Local Group activities and by mentoring members of future Scholar cohorts
- Applicants' likelihood of and commitment to pursuing a career in or related to neuroscience

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview in January online via MS Teams. Interviews will last approximately 20 minutes, will be conducted by members of the BNA EDI Working Group, and will further assess applicants' suitability for the scheme according to the final four of the above criteria.

Expectations of BNA Scholars:

Expectations of BNA Scholars are as follows:

- To arrange and attend regular meetings with their Mentor (at least 4–6 per year) – these can be in-person, online, or by telephone
- To consistently attend and engage with the bespoke career development opportunities provided by the Programme's Supporter Organisations (this is a condition of the Programme's continuation)
- To engage with the BNA by e.g. contributing items for BNA publications, attending/presenting a poster at the biennial Festival of Neuroscience, participating in BNA Local Group activities
- To provide feedback on the Programme and on their developing feelings regarding your career, by completing an evaluation form every 6 months

How to apply:

Applications will open in November each year, and can be made via the form below. Applicants are encouraged to bear in mind the selection criteria above when composing their answers.

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=TTHo6uxK5E-YesztiB1DxFV-0s0B13JDpNbe1a9nFdVUN1lKM0dEMklaR1BUNFNMME1QRU1JT0lIRy4u