EIS Action Research Grants 2026-28
Notes for applicants

Background
In early 2017 EIS Council approved an Education Committee decision to set up a funding stream to support practitioner action research amongst EIS members.

Since 2017 dozens of EIS members have undertaken research projects through the Action Research Grants (ARGs) scheme. Many of their project reports are available via the EIS website.

In 2023 the ARGs scheme was at the centre of the EIS's successful application for the GTCS Professional Learning Award for Organisations. It was acknowledged in the granting of this award that EIS professional learning supports members to develop and enhance their knowledge, expertise and skill; develop their professionalism, and to impact positively on learning experiences and outcomes of children and young people. The GTCS panel specifically noted that the ARGs scheme also supports research-informed professional learning, making good use of academic partners.

What is action research?
Action research is a form of inquiry based on planning, undertaking and assessing activity within your own professional practice to improve teaching and learning. It is usually undertaken by the teacher or educator in their own classroom, school or other setting. This could include introducing new pedagogical approaches, modifying something about how your setting is organised, or intentionally collaborating with colleagues locally or through wider networks to improve practice.

Action research typically involves:

- Identifying an issue (related to learning in your classroom / setting)
- Reviewing any relevant literature around the issue
- Planning a manageable research strategy, including any actions you wish to undertake within the project.
- Gathering and analysing data
- Taking further action or making recommendations based on your findings
- Sharing your findings.

Action research engages education professionals with learning which realises the National Model of Professional Learning across all aspects of the Model. In undertaking an action research project teaching professionals establish themselves as leaders of learning for themselves and colleagues, through enquiry,

collaboration and deepening understanding of a specific topic, to the benefit of learners and colleagues alike.

The EIS understands action research as a mode of professional learning which contributes to teacher empowerment and leadership through agency, expertise and sound educational practice.

In engaging with professional enquiry, teachers also demonstrate key professional actions as articulated in the GTCS Professional Standards for Teachers with regards to research and enquiry, 'demonstrating a depth of knowledge and understanding of:

- how to access and apply relevant findings from educational research;
- research and engagement in professional/practitioner enquiry;
- and how to have an enquiring stance in relation to your own practitioner enquiry, working ethically, individually and/or collaboratively, to challenge and inform professional practice.'

Lecturers demonstrate key professional actions as outlined in the GTCS Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland's Colleges by engaging in 'professional enquiry to develop knowledge and practice to enhance the student experience and outcomes'.

How can the EIS Action Research Grants scheme support you?

Participants in the 2026-28 ARGs scheme will be part of a cohort of researchers undertaking projects across 2 years. Within the structured 2-year programme, participants will be supported with the following activities and opportunities:

- Guidance on developing your area of interest into a clear research question and project plan, including through academic and peer support.
- Support for developing professional networks to enhance your research and future practice.
- Bespoke training on research skills including using academic literature, organising focus groups, data analysis and other skills relevant to action research.
- Regular researcher meetings throughout the programme, serving as milestones and peer support for the whole cohort.
- Opportunities to present at EIS-led events and conferences, showcasing research in progress and seeking input from across the profession.
- Support to attend and present at sector conferences and other relevant dissemination opportunities.
- Further opportunities and training to mentor action researchers from future cohorts within the scheme.
- Up to £1000 of grant funding across the 2 years, depending on the specific needs of your project.

The scheme is structured in 3 phases across the 2-year programme:

Phase 1: Scoping and Planning August 2026 - December 2026	Participants are supported to turn their research idea into a comprehensive project plan and put in place the arrangements which can support the delivery of their research project.
Phase 2: Action and Analysis January 2027 - December 2027	Participants undertake their programme of research, including action within their own setting, gathering of data and analysis.
Phase 3: Impact and Dissemination January 2028 – June 2028	Participants are supported to produce a project output, showcasing their research activity and findings. Participants are further supported to engage in dissemination activities identified within their project plans.

Who can apply?

All EIS members are eligible to apply. The initiative is intended to support practitioner research that would otherwise be unlikely to be undertaken.

Applications from individual members, groups of members or existing research collectives are all welcomed. Collaborative research activity is encouraged within the ARGs scheme, as are projects which aim to foster collaboration between teaching professionals.

Research being undertaken as part of a Masters or PhD study will not be ruled out, however, must be disclosed as part of the application process. Applicants should reflect on the practicalities of engaging with the 2-year programme of ARG activities (outlined above) while also meeting the requirements of their university course within the same research activity.

What can you research?

The aim of the initiative is to support research into aspects of pedagogy and the dynamics of teaching and learning, with a view to findings supporting continuing professional development and enhanced practice. Other potential research dimensions could be to inform EIS policy development, or to support the efficacy of teacher trade unions / professional associations.

In 2026-28, the EIS is inviting applications to support research relating to one or more of the following themes:

- Teacher voice / agency
- Empowered schools
- Health and wellbeing of teachers/lecturers/pupils/students
- Tackling prejudice or inequality related narratives / disinformation in educational establishments

- Tackling the poverty-related achievement and achievement gap
- Pupil Equity Funding
- Additional support for learning
- Teacher/lecturer workload
- Interdisciplinary Project Based Learning
- Recognising holistic achievement
- Positive behaviour approaches
- Learning for Sustainability
- Anti-racist and decolonised curriculum
- Impact of misogyny in education
- Implementation of LGBT inclusive education
- Reasonable adjustments for disabled and/or neurodivergent teachers/lecturers
- Influence of social media / online spaces on whole school communities
- Home-school relationships
- Assessment
- Curriculum architecture and reform
- Early years education
- Impact of professional learning
- Professional collaboration

How and when to apply?

Complete and return the application form and research proposal (approx. 300 words). The closing date for applications is **12 noon on Friday 24ᵗʰ April 2026.** Return to the EIS Education and Equality Department, by email to achristoph@eis.org.uk

We regret late applications cannot be considered.

What happens if your application is successful?

Successful applicants will be informed by letter as soon as possible after the Grants Panel has made its decisions. Successful applicants will be invited to an initial researchers' meeting at EIS HQ and provided with further information outlining the organisation of the 2026-28 scheme. **Details of the initial researcher meeting will be provided with the award of grant form.**

The 2026-28 ARGs scheme will be structured in three phases (see above for details). Successful applicants should be prepared to start Phase 1 in August 2026 with a focus on background research, project planning and developing their research interest into a clear research objective.

What can the action research grant be used to pay for?

The value of research grants offered by the EIS is up to £1000 across the 2-year project cycle. This can contribute to the cost of appropriate resources required to conduct the research, for example supportive literature or survey materials.

A proportion of the grant is awarded to each project at the outset of the research, to help meet the costs of undertaking it, with the remainder paid in later phases of the project cycle:

- £250 of grant funding paid at the outset of Phase 1 (August 2026).
- £250 of grant funding paid at the outset of Phase 2 (January 2027), with a further £250 of grant funding per project to support Phase 2 activity.
- Up to £250 of grant funding per project available during Phase 3 (January-June 2028).

Grant funding can be used to cover any costs associated with the project at the discretion of the researcher. The EIS is clear, however, that grant funding should not cover costs which are usually the responsibility of an employer or other service provider, such as essential classroom materials or routine school expenditure.

The EIS retains the right to publish, disseminate and archive the research findings (different arrangements may be made for research that is part of a Masters', PhD or other course of study).

Guidelines for your action research proposal

The research proposal (approx. 300 words) is the most important part of the application.

The Grants Panel will be looking for evidence of interesting, innovative and active research in your proposal. Please give some thought to the following questions below when compiling your proposal:

- What are your reasons for applying?
- What aspect of education do you wish to research and why?
- To which of the themes (see previous page) does this relate and how?
- What do you hope to find out?
- Do you have any initial thoughts about how you may be able to carry out your research (methodology)?
- How do you hope the research findings feed into your practice and / or that of colleagues?
- How could this relate to your professional development, taking into account the Professional Standards for Scotland's Teachers or the Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland's Colleges? Are there any specific aspects of the Standards which your project addresses?

Criteria for awarding grants

Action research in education is a disciplined process of inquiry conducted by and for practitioners. The primary reason for engaging in action research is to assist the action researcher in improving professional efficacy. Accordingly, the following criteria will apply in considering applications:

- The proposed action research should focus on school- / educational establishment- / classroom-related practice or aspects of education delivery

which impact on teaching and learning, in line with one or more of the given themes (listed above)

- There should be a clear objective, implicit or explicit, of the research enabling professional learning in line with the National Model for Professional Learning
- Applications should encompass a planned outcome from the research activity.
- The scale of the research should be proportionate in terms of anticipated timelines (i.e., a 2-year programme of activity in line with the 3 phases outlined above)
- Usefulness to EIS policy present or future.

How does this link to Professional Update?

Undertaking action research will certainly contribute to your Professional Update. There is the option to seek Professional Recognition for the action research through GTCS, though this is by no means required. It may be useful to discuss your application and research proposal as part of your PRD process.

Throughout the scheme, participants will engage with the Professional Standards for Scotland's Teachers or Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland's Colleges and the National Model of Professional Learning to articulate how their research project contributes to their own professional development.

Enquiries
If you have any questions about the application process, please contact Zoe McKeown via zmckeown@eis.org.uk