

NHLS RESEARCH TRUST PATHOLOGY RESEARCH AWARD: GUIDELINES

Please forward project applications as e-mail attachments to the centralised address at the MRC: rqmd@mrc.ac.za by **1 March**.

Proposals will only be accepted from **applicants employed in academic pathology laboratories (university affiliated and employed by the NICD and NIOH)** from the following departments:

- 1) Anatomical pathology
- 2) Chemical pathology
- 3) Haematology
- 4) Microbiology: Bacteriology/Immunology/Mycology/Parasitology/Virology
- 5) Oral pathology
- 6) Human genetics – only if the department is within a School of Pathology

Provided that the following eligibility criteria are met, applicants do not have to be employed by the NHLS.

Eligibility of Principal investigator (PI)

- PIs must be SA citizens or permanent residents.
- PIs must be academic/research staff members employed permanently or in long term contract positions within a pathology department and/or accredited laboratory or department in an academic/research institution, including Universities of Technology that are accredited to provide academic and professional training in medical pathology.
- PIs must have been in possession of a FCPATH, Masters/MMed or MD/PhD degree for longer than 5 years.
- PIs must have significant research and training experience as evidenced by research publications and other recognised research outputs.
- **Only one proposal will be considered for funding per individual applicant and once granted, only one such grant may be held by an individual until the project has been completed.**

Writing a proposal for a Pathology Research Award by the NHLSR Trust

Below is a guide as to what content is required in a proposal submitted for a NHLSR Trust Pathology Research Award

Problem identification

- Give a brief description of the pathology research problem that will be addressed by the proposed project.
- Outline the nature, source, extent and impact of the problem to be addressed in the broad global and regional context, giving particular attention to the extent of the problem in South Africa.

Rationale and motivation

- Provide a comprehensive background and scientific rationale for the proposed research, outlining the theoretical and operational framework that forms the basis of the research.
- Discuss how the proposed research will address the problem identified above.
- Justify the significance of conducting the research with respect to its potential to address unmet needs in human health, improvement or enhancement of pathology research and the derivation of new products (medicines, devices, therapies etc) that can lead to improved health.
- Indicate how the proposed research is expected to contribute to advancing knowledge and/or contribute to improvements in either health or health outcomes.
- Make use of the latest and most important references as is required and list these appropriately.

Research aims and objectives

- Outline the main aim(s) of the proposed research and specify the research objectives that are to be achieved.

Research design and methods

Give a detailed account of the overall research approach and the following:

- specifics of the research design
- the research methods and/or experimental techniques to be employed
- the data collection and analysis strategies / approaches to be adopted
- the statistical treatment and analysis of data
- the responsibilities and timelines in doing the work (who will do what, when?)

Applicants should give a detailed account as required above for the first year of their research, plus outlines of the research for the subsequent year(s). The research design and methods should be well aligned with the stated research aims and objectives.

Expected outputs/outcomes/impact

Outline the expected direct and/or indirect outputs/outcomes/impact of the research in terms of

- the advancement of knowledge and practice in medical pathology
- specific research outputs (eg. publications)
- contributions that the research is envisaged to make in improving health or health outcomes.

Research capacity development

Indicate (as may be appropriate) how the execution of the research project will contribute to

- the training of postgraduate students
- the development of junior research/academic staff
- “skilling” and professional development of medical/academic pathology personnel

Institutional research environment

The success of many a research project depends on the existence of a supportive and conducive environment at the host institution. In this section, applicants are requested to provide a description of the research environment at their host institution in terms of

- what complimentary research expertise exists within their own department and/or other relevant loci of research within their reach?
- what structural support, infrastructure and facilities are available to them to conduct the research?
and
- how these will/may be mobilized to ensure the success of the proposed research?

Dissemination of research results

Give an indication of the main avenues through which the results of the research will be disseminated to the scientific/academic and public audiences.

Budget

The NHLS Research Trust will support projects to a maximum of R500 000 for the duration of the project or a maximum of 3 years (whichever comes first).

The budget for the Pathology Research Award could have the following structure:

Consumables	R
Research travel	R
Conference attendance (Not more than 20% of total budget)	R
Small critical research equipment	R
Research assistantship	R
Placement support (Not more than 50% of the total budget can be used for salaries and bursaries)	R
TOTAL:	R500 000

Applicants are allowed to increase or decrease the various amounts per budget item depending on their specific requirements. The value for placement support (bursaries and salaries) is, however, subject to a prescribed maximum of 50% of the total budget. Conference attendance is also limited to 20% of the total budget.

Costs for consumables/reagents/chemicals as well as the requirements for a named method/number of samples to be analysed should be grouped. Expensive reagents should, however, be costed separately and a brief justification for all major expenditure should be submitted.

All other sources of funding (received or pending) for the project applied for must be declared. Give the name of the funding agency approached and if the outcome is known the amount granted. Failure to disclose funding information will disqualify the applicant.

If the outcome of a funding application to another granting authority is finalised after submission of the project then full details (funding agency and amount granted) must be forwarded immediately by e-mail to rgmd@mrc.ac.za

Ethics and Institutional approval

It is the **responsibility of the principal investigator** to submit parallel applications, in good time, to Administrative Heads of Institutions for approval by both the Research and Ethics and Biosafety Committees.

Ethics approval is obligatory. Ethics clearance certificates should include the name of the principal investigator, the title of the project, a reference number or clearance code and the year in which the approval was granted.

NB. Funds will not be released until these documents are submitted.

Completed signed documents may be forwarded by mail to:

Research Administration Division,
MRC, PO Box 19070,
Tygerberg, 7505
Fax No: 021 938 0368

Or scan e-mail attachment to: rgmd@mrc.ac.za

Review process

Once a proposal has been received by the MRC it will be processed by the Research Administration and Management Divisions and sent for peer review.

Criteria for peer review and scoring of proposals

Peer reviewers are asked to review a proposal according to a set of main criteria as well as specific questions under each criterion. In submitting a research proposal for funding, researchers should therefore make every effort to ensure that the proposals address these aspects comprehensively. The criteria and questions are outlined below.

Criterion	What the reviewer is asked to comment on
Scientific merit of proposal	<i>What is the potential of the proposed research for addressing important scientific knowledge gaps in its field? Does the proposal provide a sound rationale and scientific framework for conducting the work? What is the likelihood that the proposed research will make original, distinct, innovative and important contributions to knowledge, practice or both? Should the proposed work be done in the context of other ongoing research in the field at this point in time? Please make any other comments you consider important on the scientific quality of the proposal.</i>
Research design and methods	<i>Please comment on the clarity, completeness and appropriateness of the proposed study design, research methods and the experimental techniques proposed in the study. How realistic are they in the light of the stated aims of the research? Are they competitive and up-to-date given the best in the field? Given the expertise profile of the project leader and the infrastructure and resources available to them, what is the likelihood that they will be successfully deployed in the project?</i>
Significance of proposed research	<i>How important are the research questions being asked in the proposal in the context of current global, regional and national health challenges? To what extent will the proposed research advance health relevant knowledge and/or contribute to improvements in either health or health outcomes? Is the proposed research clearly and adequately justified in terms of its potential to address unmet needs in human health, improvement or enhancement of the health system, contributions to health policy or the derivation of new products (medicines, devices, therapies etc) that can lead to improved health?</i>
Track record and suitability of project leader	<i>Please comment on the suitability of the project leader given his/her academic qualifications, scientific and research experience, technical training received etc. to successfully carry out the proposed research.</i>
Ethical considerations	<i>Where relevant, outline any ethical issues and/or implications that arise from the proposed research and comment on whether these have been adequately addressed in the proposal.</i>

Upon consideration of the above criteria and specific questions, peer reviewers will score the proposal and make recommendations about whether or not they think it is deserving of funding. The proposal is scored according to a set of quality descriptions and is assigned the matching numerical score. The statements and the numerical scores are indicated in the table below.

Proposal quality description	Quality score	Reviewer score (mark with X or specify score if within a band)
Exceptionally high quality research that is pushing the boundaries in its field internationally while addressing highly significant scientific/health questions or challenges.	10	
Research of excellent quality at the forefront in its field internationally and likely to result in high impact outcomes for science, medical practice, the health system or health policy.	9	
Research of very good quality that is at the forefront nationally (and possibly internationally), addresses an important health research question and is likely to result in tangible outcomes for science, medical practice, the health system or health policy.	8	
Research of average to good quality and is likely to have a modest impact in addressing an important health research question. Could be of very good quality if specific shortcomings are addressed.	5 – 7 (choose one score within band)	
Poor quality research with major flaws in its conceptual frameworks, research methods and design and unlikely to be productive or successful.	2 - 4	
Research of unacceptably poor quality in all respects.	1-3	

Reviewers' evaluations will be submitted together with the proposal to the NHLS Research Trust Grants Committee for consideration. The Grants Committee will convene in June and allocate available funding using as criteria reviewer rankings and comments. The outcome of applications will be communicated to institutions and individuals and will include, whether successful or unsuccessful, feedback and comments.

Curriculum vitae of principal investigator

Only brief professional CVs and publications from the past five years will be accepted. The length of the CV must not exceed ten pages.

Submission of completed applications

Completed application forms, together with supporting documentation, must be submitted by e-mail to the MRC's centralised address: rgmd@mrc.ac.za. The closing date for submissions is 1 March and applications received after this date will not be processed.

Reporting

Grantees must submit an annual progress report no later than the last day of August following the year of award of the grant. A final project report must be submitted no later than 3 months following the end date of the project. Failure to submit these reports could result in an applicant's future applications being rejected.

CONTACTS AT THE MRC RESEARCH GRANTS MANAGEMENT DIVISION

Administration enquiries and deadlines

Mr CA Glass Tel: (021) 938 0225 e-mail: clive.glass@mrc.ac.za