Imperial College
London
Department of Immunology and Inflammation

Departmental Guidelines for Approvals of Research Funding Applications

Purpose:

- To outline the process for submitting research applications within the Department of Immunology and Inflammation (I&I).

To:

- All Principal Investigators within I&I
- Clinicians holding honorary associations with I&I
- Academic Training Leads for Renal Medicine, Haematology and Rheumatology.

Background:

- I&I has a large group of Principal Investigators leading innovative basic and clinical research programmes within our Centres and in collaboration with clinicians across the Academic Health Science Centre. This results in a large volume of research applications to multiple funding bodies which vary greatly in their complexity.

- Imperial College NHS Trust (ICHNT) hosts multiple clinical academic training programmes and consequently we have many clinical trainees applying for funding for MD/PhD training. These fellows may be co-supervised by Clinicians who are formally (e.g. through honorary contracts) affiliated with our department. In this situation, the College *requires* that at least one co-supervisor is appointed from the permanent College academic staff. If a fellow will be registered with I&I, this co-supervisor must be a member of I&I's substantive academic staff at a level of Lecturer and above. Key documents relating to research degree supervision include:

  - Research Degree Precepts 2022-23
  - Eligibility for Research Degree Supervision
  - Early stage assessment (at 9 months for full-time students) guidance
  - Late stage assessment (18-24 months for full-time students) guidance
  - PhD fees

- I&I has a team of administrative and support staff lead by the Department Manager who are responsible for the administrative and operational functions of the department. The Section Managers together with the Divisional Managers are responsible for the pre- and post-grant application process. There are multiple College resources providing information on research funding management.

- The Joint Research Office provides support for both research within the Faculty of Medicine and Clinical Studies within ICHNT. The JRO has teams allocated to each department including I&I.

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Overview:

The key components of grant applications are the research plan ('the science') and the research costings. For fellowships, additional components are the supervisor(s) and for intermediate fellowships and higher, the sponsor. For MD/PhD degrees it is important that the Department has knowledge of the funding arrangements particularly that (1) funding is available for the duration of the research degree (and if not, what arrangements are planned for securing additional funding) and (2) how the research degree fees will be paid. **The Department will not approve registration for any research student until details of each element (science, supervisors, and funding) have been confirmed.** Imperial's Registry team does not allow backdated registration, so allow plenty of time for these items to be discussed and agreed with the HoD/Department Manager.

Whilst the Department will communicate these guidelines as widely as possible, it is inevitable that some potential applicants will not be reached such as those colleagues not directly employed within the Department. This is especially true to the aforementioned NHS clinical training scholarships. If a colleague asks for a Department academic to act as a supervisory role on an application, it is essential that the academic provides a timely link to their Section Manager, so these guidelines can be shared and followed.

1. The Research Plan

The Department requires that all research plans are peer-reviewed internally. This feedback is invariably a useful process resulting in stronger applications, and confirmation that peer review has been completed must be provided in Worktribe for all applications. Review can be arranged through the Departmental Research Committee, who will oversee this process and make sure that the appropriate reviewers have been considered. No application will be approved for submission unless an appropriate peer-review process has been completed. This is also required for outline applications, plus applications initially funded by internal (e.g. ICHNT) or soft funding. This is a requirement of Imperial and not necessarily the specific funder, so you will be asked to accurately cost regardless of the detail they require.

2. The Costing Process

2i. Overview
Costings for grant applications vary in complexity and are multi-faceted, comprising one or more of the following elements: indirect and direct staff costs, direct research costs, access charges, animal costings, NHS-related costings, overheads etc. Different funders and calls permit the inclusion of different costs: consideration of how this affects each proposal, and of how best to support the planned research, is a process that *must start early in the application*. Costings must be calculated and discussed with the Section Managers well ahead of grant deadlines.

Once applications have been finalised the approval process (Departmental and then Joint Research Office authorisation and then submission to the funding body) requires **at least 5 working days before the funding body deadline**.

Late applications are not acceptable. There is a governance risk for the Department and College if the approval process is not given due diligence, and our Departmental Leadership will not authorise the submission of applications finalised less than 5 working days ahead of the funder deadline. There is a mistaken perception that the financial approvals are not important or that they can be done very quickly (we have previously been asked to approve within hours of a funding deadline). The Department can and will reject successful applications if the costing was not carried out properly, with sufficient time to consider all elements, or where there are financial implications for the Department that were not approved at submission (e.g. research degree fees).

2ii. Our approach to costing

The key elements in the costing process are detailed below, and summarised in Appendices A and B.

The Department costs applications on the College's costing system, Worktribe, which can only be accessed by the Department's core administrative team.

Every application submitted requires a unique costing, even if there has been no change in the costs applied for from previous applications, and/or no change in funder. If the funder requires an outline application prior to a main application, this will require approval for both stages on Worktribe.

Costings must be submitted internally for approval by the College and JRO before they are submitted to a funder.

Applications submitted before the costing is approved or not matching the approved costing will not be supported.

To initiate the costing process the administrative team need 1) the weblink to the call; 2) a start and end date; 3) project title; 4) names of academics involved with the percentage of their time working on the project.

It is important that the Department knows up front whether there will be collaborators in the study. The location and the role of the collaborator greatly affects what is required of our costing. Generally, *if we are the lead applicant then all costs will flow through u*s, whilst if we are co-leads, *our costs will appear on the lead's application*. Whilst there are exceptions, we are responsible for costing and approving our part of any application prior to submission. If you are contacted by a Department within or external to the College to collaborate on a costing, notify your Section Manager immediately. Be aware that any costs awarded to a partner, internal or external, will not be accessible to the Department so ensure the split is accurate.

If the application being submitted is to fund an existing member of staff, their salary must be correctly imported into the costing. For existing staff this is done using Worktribe. For non-

College staff we need a recent payslip to generate correct costings. The College will match NHS pay for clinical staff. If the progression of a clinical staff member through grades is reliant on passing training milestones rather than a fixed point each year, it is important the College is made aware of these dates by the Trust HR team.

Animal research costings should follow the Central Biomedical Service procedures and utilise the approved costing tool. A unique CBS costing is required for every unique Worktribe costing. Be wary that the CBS costing tool updates during the year, so always check the form you are using is valid.

It is also important to source any quotes required for equipment purchases, work from service providers, or facility access charges. The Lab and Section Manager will be able to assist with this. Costs will be inputted into the system as shown on the quote, with VAT included where necessary.

To approve the purchase of equipment over £10k, our Accounts Payable requires two comparable quotes to prove value for money. Whilst only 1 quote is needed for the costing stage, it is worth completing this task at this stage to ensure we are costing at the correct level.

If your costing involves use of NHS services, it is important to liaise with the NHS team (imperial.admin_trustresearchcontracts@nhs.net). Note that all studies funded by a non-commercial organisation with NHS Trust costs will require a SoECAT (Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Template), sometimes even if it is a nil-return. SoECATs can be approved by the NHS Trust team.

The Department will always look to maximise costs where we can, including the costs for advertising posts and inflation where the funder permits. For computer equipment, the Department will not fund new devices for research staff so, if these are needed, these should be included in your application if possible.

If your application requires a letter of support from the Head of the Department or another senior colleague, please do also flag this to your Section Manager so that it can be prepared in advance.

Submission of a grant application often involves a portal system that is unique to a funder. These portals have different levels of approval, whether it is a Research Manager, Head of Department or an IP Officer. Applicants are advised to check the requirements of the system in advance so these people can be identified through the Section Manager and notified in advance to ensure the application does not miss a deadline.

3. MD/PhD supervision and related matters

The Department requires that the MD/PhD supervision team is comprised of at least two (but no more than three) supervisors. Where a team of two supervisors are related, a third supervisor must be appointed. It is important that one of the team is experienced in

supervision, so a common combination is a Senior PI (with experience in PhD supervision) together with a Junior PI (with no PhD supervision experience). It is mandated that at least one member of the supervision team is a permanent College academic member of staff; if the degree will be registered through I&I, the primary supervisor must be a permanent member of I&I's academic staff at Lecturer level or above. All supervisors, including those with honorary contracts, must have completed the relevant training and be fully aware of their responsibilities. The Educational Development Unit provides 'Supervising PhD students' workshops.

Application Guidance – Immunology and Inflammation

Departmental:
Divisional Manager: Rena John-Lewis

Section Managers (CID; CMII; and Haematology): Furqan Shah; Debbie Oram; Jonathan Shepherd

Research Support:
Research Manager: Dr Dania Grant-Serroukh

Lab Managers:
CID: Dr Kerry Rostron
CMII/Haematology: Mr Paul Coote
Senior Lab Manager: Mr Neil Galloway-Phillipps

Animal Costings:
CBS Site Manager: Ray Edgar
CBS Chief Technician: Anthony Iglesias

NHS Costings:
NHS JRO: Balbir Jhitta
          Christopher Khuoge

Joint Research Office:
Grants Manager: Nataleen Gould

Senior Grants Administrator: Neema Shivraj

Contract Negotiator: Sufyan Ahmed

STAGE ONE: Inform your Section Manager as soon as possible, copying to the Divisional Manager, if there is a funding scheme you wish to apply for. In the Section Manager's absence please ensure that the Divisional Manager is copied in throughout all application correspondence. The Section Manager will need all the information relating to the call such as: deadline, funder, maximum budget allowed, eligibility criteria. Please note that if a **letter of support** is required, the research support team will need to be notified in advance of the deadline. For **MRC applications**, please check if they will need to be submitted to a shadow panel for internal review.

STAGE TWO: Provide the Section Manager with a breakdown of costs so that a Worktribe proposal can be created. This allows the department to see the full economic cost of a proposal and is required for **all** research applications. Any **large equipment** requests must be checked and approved by your lab manager, who will confirm that the item(s) do not already exist within the department and that there is sufficient space available to house them. Costs must be accompanied by two quotations, providing evidence that the best price possible has been sourced. If your application includes **animal costings**, please submit a CBS costing tool to the site manager with at least **10 working days' notice**. For any **NHS costings**, please see contact list on the left. Any costings for research partners are to be provided by the partner institution. Worktribe proposals must be approved by the department and the Joint Research Office before submission: finalised proposals (science and budget) must be received by the JRO for checking **at least five working days** prior to the funder deadline.

STAGE THREE: Once you have confirmation that the Worktribe has been approved, please include these approved costs on your application form. If you are submitting your application through an online portal, contact your Section Manager who can complete the budgetary section of the application. NB: For MRC applications through Je-S your application will require additional supporting documentation.

STAGE FOUR: Once the application is complete, please forward a copy to the Section Manager who will liaise with the Joint Research Office as they complete their final checks. Once fully approved, please submit your application to the funder copying to your Section Manager. For online applications, the JRO will complete the final submission. Some online applications require approval from the Head of Department and the Joint Research Compliance Office: **please leave adequate time before any deadline to acquire these.**

STAGE FIVE - OUTCOME:
Please let your Section Manager know once you have received the outcome of your application. If successful, forward the award letter/confirmation and the Section Manager will contact the Joint Research Office to commence the award set-up process. As part of this you will be sent a governance questionnaire for completion. Awards will not be set up until a completed questionnaire has been received by the JRO.

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Appendix B - Required checklists

Please note that applications will not be processed unless the applicant and the supervisors have followed these guidelines within the required timelines. There will be no exceptions.

Application Process:

For all applications	YES	N/A
Inform Section Manager and Divisional Manager of intention to submit application		
At least 4 weeks in advance of the funder deadline provide a draft full application*, including funder and call details, to the Departmental Research Committee (imminf.research@imperial.ac.uk) for review. *in exceptional circumstances a draft science case may be accepted – please check with the Research Committee in advance.		
Undertake application costing following Application Costing Checklist		
Inform Section Manager if a Letter of Support is required; work with them and Research Manager Dania Grant-Serroukh to prepare		
Check which approvals are required in your funder's submission portal; identify relevant contacts with your Section Manager and notify them of your application well in advance of any deadlines		
Consider any potential Conflict of Interest that may need to be captured and approved		
Inform your Section Manager of any in-kind (financial or other support) contribution that applies to your project. They will work with you, our Contracts team, our Finance Officer and Research Compliance to ensure this is handled and recorded appropriately		
Submission in Worktribe – the following must be provided to your Section Manager to be included on all proposals		
Confirmation from the Departmental Research Committee that the project has been reviewed and is supported scientifically		
Full project title and summary (e.g., not 'J Bloggs Fellowship')		
Full budget details, including confirmation of any quotes, equipment requests, salary matching requests, etc.		
A final, or almost-final, draft of the full application that includes project details as well as finances		
Worktribe proposals must be submitted for review by your Section Manager and approval at least 5 working days ahead of the relevant funder deadline		
Submission to funder		
Only submit your application once it has full (financial and scientific) JRO and Department approval		
Allow sufficient time before your funder's deadline for any portal-based approvals to be given		

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Application Costing Checklist:

Worktribe proposals must be submitted for review and approval at least 5 working days ahead of the relevant funder deadline

To create a proposal and generate a 'P' number:		
Send to Section Manager, copied to Divisional Manager	**YES**	**N/A**
Call URL (including details of deadline)		
Confirm whether this is an Outline or Full application		
Proposed title and start/end dates		
Names of all ICL academics involved, and the % time they will spend on the project		
Confirm whether you will include any external research partners or collaborators		
Once the proposal has been created, a 'P' number will be generated overnight		
Budgets – details to provide to your Section Manager for <u>all</u> applications:		
Staff Salaries	**YES**	**N/A**
If costing a named post for someone who is not already employed by College, provide a copy of their most recent payslip		
If salary progression is dependent on passing training milestones (i.e. clinical staff) relevant dates must also be provided to support accurate costings		
If you are costing a significant number of new posts, work with your lab manager and the Department to consider whether there is capacity within the Department's existing footprint to accommodate them		
Equipment	**YES**	**N/A**
For items over £10k in value, consider the need for at least 2 quotations Remember to include in your project plan time to tender for items over £50k in value		
Provide confirmation from Lab Manager that the equipment does not already exist within the department, that there is a need for it, and that there is sufficient space to house it		
Remember to include maintenance costs where funders allow		
Facilities Access Charges		
Provide quotes for all internal facilities you wish to make use of during your project (e.g. Flow Cytometry, Confocal Microscopy, etc.)		
CBS Costs	**YES**	**N/A**
Provide an up-to-date CBS Costing Tool that has been approved by the relevant site manager. **Note: CBS require 10 working days to review and approve costings**		
NHS Costs	**YES**	**N/A**
Liaise with the NHS Research Team to obtain approved NHS costs		
Note: all studies funded by a non-commercial organisation with NHS Trust costs will require a SoECAT (Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Template), sometimes even if it is a nil-return. This can be approved by the NHS Trust team.		

Research Partners	YES	N/A
Where we are the lead: provide contact details and approved budgets for external partners; provide details of ICL collaborators so that we can create subprojects for them		
Where we are not the lead: provide the lead applicant/co-ordinators' details as well as your budgetary requirements		
Service Providers	**YES**	**N/A**
Provide quotes for all services you wish to fund from your project budget (e.g. sequencing, sample storage, couriers)		
Fellowships and projects supporting staff who will register for a PhD	**YES**	**N/A**
Ensure all supervisors are named on the proposal, and that the Departmental guidance on research supervision has been followed		
Include provision for full tuition fees where the funder allows Where a funder does not support tuition fees, whether fully or in part, identify an alternative funding source and agree this with the Department prior to submission		
Where applicable, include provision for bench fees		