

Procedures for Submission and Review of Proposals

I. Submission of New Proposals

❖ General Comments

- a. There are two regular funding cycles during each fiscal year: Spring and Fall. The Spring Cycle is the major funding cycle and is open to all members of the Faculty of Medicine. In order to favor junior faculty members, the MPP Research Fund for the fall cycle is now restricted to Instructors, Assistant Professors, and Associate Professors promoted or appointed in the last five years. Proposals can be submitted for a maximum of three years, with an annual budget up to \$40,000. The maximum amount an investigator may be awarded per year is \$40,000 irrespective of the number of proposals submitted by the same investigator and found meritorious and eligible for funding. This total yearly budget per PI includes any amounts granted upon renewal of previously approved proposals. Proposals can only be submitted through the Online Submission System.
- b. Researchers are urged to limit the proposed research to that which can be achieved with the aforementioned budgetary limits. Proposals with budgets greater than those limits must provide the sources being sought or secured for the additional funding.
- c. The funding cycles is open to applications for research work extending over 1 to 3 years. Proposals extending beyond one year must detail the work that will be conducted every year and the amount of funding required per year. Renewed funding during subsequent years will depend on demonstration of significant progress towards achieving the aims set forth in the original proposal, as detailed in a progress report (see below under point #3: Proposals Submitted for Renewal).
- d. Any proposal submitted for additional funding beyond its originally approved funding period will not be considered by the RC.
- e. In general, funding will favor hypothesis-driven proposals. Financial support for establishment of registries or databases may be granted for a limited period of time and provided a clear relevance to research activity is presented. Long term support should be sought from other sources or eventually derived from hypothesis-driven research proposals making use of the registry.
- f. Applications submitted in a previous cycle but not funded can be resubmitted only for one more cycle.

- g. **Attention:** If you have previously received a total of 3 years funding from RC (total of 3 years funding may be for one or more projects) then you should *provide evidence of having applied for extramural* funding other than the Lebanese National Council for Scientific Research **LNCSR** regardless of whether the outcome was positive or negative. Records of submissions may be subject to review.
- h. A final report for the last funded grant is required from each PI that includes the research outcome (findings- publications, papers under review, international presentations...). PIs who do not submit final report will not be allowed to proceed with new application submission.
- i. The PI should inform or update the RC about any extramural funding that was secured for the same or for part of the submitted proposal, including amount and duration of support and relevant details should be included in the original application or sent later to the RC chair/co-chairs. Missing or incomplete information may disqualify an application or result in revoking of any already approved RC funding.

❖ **Submission Procedures**

- a. A call for submission of proposals is made at least 1 month prior to the set deadline. In general, the deadline for submission of new proposals for the Spring Cycle will be by the first week of February and that for renewals will be by March 31 of each year. In general, the deadline for submission of new proposals for the Fall Cycle will be by the first week of October and that for renewals will be by October 30 of each year.
- b. Funding for proposals submitted during the Spring Cycle will normally commence in July of the same year. Funding for proposals submitted during the Fall Cycle will normally commence on February 1 of the following year.
- c. All proposals must comply with the guidelines for preparing research proposals for intramural funding as published online at <https://www.aub.edu.lb/fm/medicalresearch/Documents/Guidelines%20for%20Research%20Proposal%20Submission%20new.pdf>
Applicants should read the guidelines thoroughly and include all items therein mentioned in their proposal. Chance of funding may be adversely affected if applications are partially completed.
- d. The applicants are encouraged to suggest up to four potential reviewers for each application. All suggested reviewers must be external (outside Lebanon) with no close collaborations with the PI, co-PI and co-investigators for the last five years. However, the ultimate decision for the selection of reviewers is for the research committee. Internal reviewers will be selected by the RC.

- e. If the applicants wish to exclude a potential internal or external reviewer, he/she must provide a brief rationale. However, the ultimate decision for the selection of reviewers is for the research committee.
- f. The applicants must include 5 keywords relevant to their proposal.

❖ Review Process for New Proposals

- a. The RC meets within 5-7 days following the announced deadline for submission of proposals. A list of submitted proposals for the specific funding cycle and the respective abstracts are distributed to all RC members at that time. The full proposals will be available online to all RC members only.
 - Primary & secondary custodians from among the RC members will be assigned to each proposal by the Chair or co-Chairs of the RC.
 - Each custodian will suggest to the RC administrator the ranked names of four external reviewers.
 - RC custodians should not communicate or coordinate among each other in suggesting reviewers to ensure fairness in the selection process.
 - The reviewers and the RC members should not be reviewers or custodians for proposals when a Conflict of Interest might exist.
 - RC members with any Conflict of Interest will be asked to leave the meeting during discussion of any relevant proposal.
 - RC administrator should check that the suggested reviewers have no recent collaboration (series of publications; no enclose collaboration; mentoring...) with the PI, co-PI and co-investigators at least during the last five years.

➤ **Triage Process:**

Once the first RC review process has been completed, the administrator will assemble the score sheets for all RC members and prepare the mean, median and SD for all proposals for review by the Chair or co-Chairs. A decision is made to triage out applications if the mean score received is below the lower 60th percentile with no rounding.

- Applications with mean scores falling within the top 10th percentile will be conditionally recommended for funding with no need for submission of a rebuttal. Some questions may be raised and they need to be satisfactorily answered. Otherwise, this application will be rescored during the rebuttal process based on the information submitted or as initially submitted otherwise. Applicants whose applications were triaged out will be immediately informed.

- The primary custodian writes a summary of the discussion with specific queries and comments based upon the RC committee deliberations, and attaches the reviewers' comments, requesting the PI's responses to all (or some) comments, point by point. The comments are reviewed by the secondary custodian then by the RC co-chairs before being transmitted to the PI. The PI is asked to submit his/her response within 3 weeks so that it may be considered by the RC members in the second and final round of scoring of the proposals. If no response is received within the set time limit, the RC will base its recommendation on the initial review and may choose to disqualify the proposal from potential funding.
- RC members will be notified about the final RC decision for funding at the end of each cycle.

II. Proposals Submitted for Renewal

- a. Submission: Proposals that have been previously approved for more than one year may be submitted for renewed funding. In such cases, the researcher (PI) must submit the original abstract and specific aims of the proposal, accompanied by a detailed progress report. The progress report must address each specific aim that the author had proposed to achieve within the elapsed year separately and in detail, indicating what has been accomplished. The author must focus on the original plan he/she submitted and demonstrate the success in following it and achieving its goals. He/She must explain and justify any deviations, amendments or new directions that were pursued or that are proposed for the future. He/She must discuss any limitations encountered or failure to achieve the aims and the possible reasons for them. Publications may be appended but are not a replacement for a progress report. A summary of how the funds were dispersed/utilized over past year of funding needs to be submitted with the renewal request.
- b. Review: For proposals that have been previously approved for more than one year and which are being submitted for renewal, the Chair or co-Chairs of the RC will assign an RC member who preferably should be the same person who was assigned to the proposal when it was originally approved. The assigned RC custodian will review the status of the proposal up to the present, focusing on the progress achieved and the extent to which the aims have been met. The progress report is reviewed and presented to the RC in the context of the original approved plan. The RC votes on whether the proposal ought to be re-approved or not; no scoring is undertaken.

III. **Final Decisions**

Based on the final scores and votes, recommendations for funding by the RC Chair or co-Chairs are made in a detailed report submitted to the Dean FM for MPP funds and to the Director of the OGC office for URB funds, as per this order of priority until the funds allocated for that particular funding cycle are used up. The reports will include a description of the proposed research, its strengths, weaknesses and major comments of the reviewers and the RC, along with the progress report of the PI for renewal. The requested budget is detailed and the recommendations should justify any changes to the requested budget.

All discussions in RC meetings are **confidential**. Members of the RC and the reviewers are asked to refrain strictly from discussing matters related to the proposed research protocols with the applicants or others.