



# **Block Funding Program**

## **Graduate Research Grants (GRG)**

April 2019

## Contents

1) Introduction .....	3
2) Objectives of the Program .....	3
3) Target Groups .....	4
4) Policies .....	4
4.1 General Principles: .....	4
4.2 Policies for Employees: .....	6
4.3 Policies for Postgraduate Students in Oman: .....	6
4.4 Policies for Postgraduate Students Studying Abroad: .....	7
5) Research Proposals .....	7
Content of Research Proposals: .....	7
6) Application Process for Employees and Postgraduate Students in Oman .....	9
6.1 Submission of Proposals: .....	9
6.2 Evaluation Criteria:.....	10
6.3 Funding Regulations:.....	12
6.4 Agreement and Reporting: .....	13
7) Application Process for Postgraduate Students Studying Abroad.....	16
7.1 Submission of Proposals: .....	16
7.2 Evaluation Criteria:.....	16
7.3 Funding Regulations:.....	17
7.4 Agreement and Reporting: .....	17
8) Acknowledgment: .....	17

## 1) Introduction

The Graduate Research Grant (GRG) Program was established to encourage and enable Omani graduates and pre-doctoral investigators, whether they are working professionals or postgraduate students, to pursue research. These grants run in parallel to other Block Funding grants including the Research Grants (RG) and Undergraduate Research Grants (URG).

## 2) Objectives of the Program

The program aims to:

1. Build a research culture in the Sultanate through supporting the initiatives of interested individuals or groups of investigators in areas that are relevant to their expertise
2. Improve the quantity and quality of the pre-doctoral research
3. Cultivate individual creativity
4. Support research capacity building efforts in Oman through:
  - Assisting postgraduate students to develop key research skills e.g. writing research proposals, developing research methodology, communication, research management and dissemination of results/ findings
  - Providing opportunities for hands-on research training
5. Establish a network of researchers
6. Improve research outputs, such as:
  - The publication of papers in peer-reviewed journals
  - Patents resulting from innovative research
  - The commercialisation of research products

### **3) Target Groups**

This program provides financial support for the following groups of Omani researchers:

1. Full time Employees with pre-doctoral qualifications, including:
  - Bachelor degree holders with a minimum of 3 years of work experience
  - Master degree holders
2. Postgraduate students, enrolled in postgraduate diplomas, Master and PhD programs in affiliated academic institutions in Oman.
3. Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) residents
4. Postgraduate students studying abroad, who did not receive any government or industry funded scholarships for the current academic degree that they are enrolled in.

### **4) Policies**

#### **4.1 General Principles:**

1. This program is reserved for Omanis. However, the supervisor may be non-Omani.
2. The proposal must be submitted via the Research Information Management System (RIMS) on TRC's website.
3. GRG grants are governed by the following caps:
  - The maximum duration of a project is two years.
  - The budget of a GRG is capped at OMR 3,000/ project, and there are no caps for subcategories.

4. All research team members (PI, Co-PI, Co-investigators and supervisor), who are residing in Oman, must be registered at a Research Institution (RI) affiliated with TRC i.e. RIs must be linked to TRC electronically.
5. PI and Co-PI must be from the same institution.
6. The Researcher is allowed to submit only one proposal per call per program. The PI may, however, be included as a team member in another project (under same Program); in addition to the one he/she leads.
7. Researchers may participate in more than one research program supported by TRC.
8. PhD degree holders are not eligible to apply as PIs, but can serve as supervisors or co-investigators.
9. The management of all proposals/ projects (i.e. starting from submission of a proposal up to the approval of the final report and auditing of a successfully completed project) takes place on TRC's electronic portal, the Research Information Management System (RIMS).
10. For applicants residing in Oman, the application requires approval from the Institutional Research Focal Point (IRFP) and Institutional Internal Evaluation Committee (IIEC).
11. RIs will be competing for funds allocated for a specific program. Thus, if an RI decides to submit an application for one program (e.g. GRG) , only then will it be competing with other RIs for the fund allocated only for that specific program (in this case, GRG).
12. None of the research team members must have any records of non-compliance with TRC's policies and regulations.
13. If neither the PI nor the Co-PI is able to bring a GRG project to a successful completion, the project should be terminated by the RI and the unutilized funds must be returned to TRC at the end of the funding cycle.

## 4.2 Policies for Employees:

1. The PI should be registered as a full time employee in an institution affiliated with TRC.
2. As a PI, the minimum qualification required is a bachelor degree and at least 3 years of work experience.
3. The PI has to assign a Co-PI for the project. However, adding other members to research team is optional.
4. The same previous criteria are applicable to Co- Principal Investigators.
5. Bachelor degree holders need to have a supervisor for the project. The minimum qualification of the supervisor is a master's degree. The supervisor does not have to be from the same institution as the PI.
6. Supervision and work experience are not mandatory for PIs, who hold a master degree.

## 4.3 Policies for Postgraduate Students in Oman:

1. The PI can be a full time or part-time Omani postgraduate student.
2. The PI has to assign a Co-PI for the project. However, adding other members to research team is optional.
3. The application requires an approval from the supervisor through RIMS.
4. OMSB residents are required to be actively registered in an OMSB program. The supervisor should hold a 'senior specialist' position or higher.
5. The acceptance of the terms and conditions by both the PI and the supervisor represent an official declaration that the student is actively registered in a postgraduate program.
6. The funded research project should be successfully completed before the end of the postgraduate degree program.

## 4.4 Policies for Postgraduate Students Studying Abroad:

1. The PI must be an Omani postgraduate student.
2. The PI should be registered in an academic institute.
3. The PI should not have received any other government or industry funded scholarship in Oman for the current academic degree.

## 5) Research Proposals

### Content of Research Proposals:

#### **1. Introduction and Statement of The Problem/ Project:**

Describe the proposed research and the main problem to be addressed.

#### **2. Literature Review and Analysis of Related Work:**

Outline the background leading up to the present status of the issue, critically evaluate existing knowledge, and specifically identify the gaps that the project is trying to fill. State what you intend to achieve with your proposed research. Link the specific aims of this particular research project to broader, long-term objectives.

#### **3. Objectives:**

Describe the aim of the research project.

**4. Research Methodology:**

Describe the research design, conceptual or clinical framework, procedures, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Include how the information will be collected, analysed, and interpreted.

**5. Academic, Scientific and /or Innovation Significance:**

State the importance of the research to your field of study and/ or society. Describe your overall career/ academic goals and explain how the research grant will enable you to reach these goals. Identify the skills, theories, conceptual approaches, etc. to be learned or enhanced in this project.

**6. Benefits to Oman**

**7. References:**

State the sources of information/ data presented in the proposal. Also, make sure that the information is referred to accurately, essential and consistent with the references' list.

## 6) Application Process for Employees and Postgraduate Students in Oman

### 6.1 Submission of Proposals:

1. The PI prepares the proposal, circulates it to all team members for approval and then submits it on RIMS.
2. If supervision is required, the supervisor has to approve the application.
3. The Institutional Research Focal Point (IRFP) screens, and then approves or rejects the submitted proposals.
4. Prior to submitting the application to TRC, it is the responsibility of the PI/ IRFP to get the ethical approval, whenever it is needed.
5. “Expected Impacts” are evaluated by IIEC members. The following points need to be noted:
  - Proposals must adequately address all the relevant criteria set by TRC in order to avoid disqualification/ rejection.
  - All approved proposals must be first ranked based on the evaluation criteria outlined below.
  - When the IIEC rejects a proposal, the feedback generated in the review process will be communicated to the PI/ team leader to give the team a chance to improve their research proposal so as it will be, hopefully, approved in the next funding cycle.
6. After receiving the list of approved proposals from IRFP, TRC will NOT accept any re-submissions for the current cycle.
7. It is possible to log on to RIMS at any time in order to check the status of the proposals.

8. There is no guarantee for a qualified proposal to receive funding. This is dependent on the quantity and quality of submitted proposals as well as on available financial resources at TRC each year.
9. Notifications of approval or rejection of a proposal will be communicated through RIMS. Electronically generated e-mails will be sent to the research team as well as to the IRFP informing them about TRC's final decision.

## **6.2 Evaluation Criteria:**

Institutional Internal Evaluation Committee (IIEC) will assess each proposal based on the following evaluation criteria:

### **Excellence Criteria:**

IIEC shall use the following criteria to evaluate the "Excellence" level of GRG proposals

- Novelty and originality of the research questions
- Clarity of the proposal
- Literature and (where appropriate) patent reviews
- Methodology
- Relevance of the proposed research to Oman
- Budget breakdown and usage

## Expected Impact:

Although the following criteria might NOT be always applicable to all GRGs, postgraduate students as well as Institutional Internal Evaluation Committees (IIEC) are highly encouraged to address these points during the formulation and the evaluation of GRG proposals:

1. Involvement of other researchers e.g. research assistants, technicians and undergraduate students in the project
2. The scope of each proposal whether it falls within priority areas or not.
3. Applicability and relevance to Oman's socioeconomic development and related public policies;
4. Collaboration with other local/ international institutions (academic, public or private sectors) in terms of, for example, practical participation in conducting the research, or by providing either financial or in-kind contributions. This has to be supported by official documents.
5. Number of 'peer reviewed' or 'refereed' publications that are going to result from the submitted proposals.
6. Expected number of Intellectual Properties (IPs) to be created/ obtained

## Institution-Defined Criteria:

TRC highly encourages Research Institutes (RIs) to develop their own research vision, strategy and priorities; and consequently to come up with additional evaluation criteria. These criteria might vary over time and from one application cycle to the next depending on institutional research needs and circumstances.

## 6.3 Funding Regulations:

1. The project should be fully completed within a maximum duration of two years.
2. The total budget:
  - is capped at OMR 3,000/ project.
  - should be used for expenses directly related to the completion of the project.
3. Approved funds can be used for the following common categories:
  - Materials and supply: e.g. tools, kits, chemicals and glassware
  - Equipment
  - Data collection/ analysis
  - Local travel either to work on the project or to attend a related conference
  - Administrative costs: e.g. purchasing of literature, use of university facilities & miscellaneous issues
  - Dissemination of findings
4. Funds can be spent as deemed best i.e. there are no caps for categories
5. The budget does NOT cover the cost of international visit

## 6.4 Agreement and Reporting:

### Grant Agreement:

The research “Grant Agreement” is the legal document, which stipulates the rights and obligations of all the parties and specifies, amongst other things, the following:

1. The hosting institution shall agree to ensure the availability of the minimum requirements for the implementation of the project. These include the hosting institution's commitment, within the framework of the institution's regulations and TRC's requirements, to manage the project fully until it reaches a successful completion.
2. To become a legally binding document, one “Grant Agreement” for all GRG projects at a particular RI will be signed by the hosting institution and TRC.
3. TRC expects RIs to sign internal grant agreements with the PIs for each funded project.

### 2. Reports:

PIs must provide updates about work progress and send the reports through RIMS to IRFP.

### Progress Reports:

Progress reports, governed by the following guidelines, need to be screened first by IRFP:

1. Starting from the project's commencement date, a technical progress report is to be submitted at the end of the first year, if the project's duration is more than one year. For shorter projects that do not exceed one year, the PIs should submit only a final report at the end of the project.
2. Progress reports must be submitted using the published progress report format and to be fully managed on TRC's electronic portal, RIMS.
3. This report should highlight:
  - Progress made in achieving the objectives and plans specified in the approved research proposal.
  - Any departures from the original objectives of the approved proposal.
  - Lists of:
    - Results
    - Outcomes/ achievements/ impacts
    - Problems/ difficulties encountered
    - Proposed objectives and tasks as well as any changes for the next reporting period
  - Contribution to capacity building: a list of all staff involved in the project, with their categories and institutional affiliations
  - Development of research infrastructure, including equipment, where applicable.
  - Project's outreach activities
  - Publications, as attachments, if any.
  - PIs may include contributions from other parties involved in the project
  - Financial expenditure reporting
4. These reports inform IRFP about the progress and achievements of the project.

5. The reports are eventually evaluated by IIEC. PIs are notified by IRFP through RIMS about the acceptance/ rejection of the report
6. IRFP must submit a comprehensive annual technical report via RIMS to TRC highlighting the level of achievements against the agreed upon Output Performance Indicators. The report should also include justifications on the lack of achievements, where applicable.
7. Delays in submitting the reports will result in a reduction in the level of funding for the next cycle.
8. PIs must update their financial expenditures on regular basis.
9. TRC reserves the right to conduct periodic audits to ensure its resources are used as per the “Grant Agreement”.

### Final Report:

The final scientific/ technical report must be sent along with the final statement of expenditure to IRFP, within 3 months of a project’s completion date. The contents of the final report are very similar to progress reports, yet the final reports have to be more comprehensive and cover the entire duration of the project. The final report must be approved before the PI can apply for another GRG in future cycles.

## **7) Application Process for Postgraduate Students Studying Abroad**

### **7.1 Submission of Proposals:**

Since these academic institutes are NOT affiliated with TRC, the student should email the following documents to TRC before end of April (email: [int.student@trc.gov.om](mailto:int.student@trc.gov.om)):

- Research proposal
- National identification documents i.e. passport and/or National ID
- Clearance letter from the student that he/she are not benefiting from government or industry funded scholarships in Oman for the current academic degree.
- International Student form duly filled.

### **7.2 Evaluation Criteria:**

Proposals submitted through RIMS will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- The project falls within a national/ TRC priority area
- The international ranking of the university
- The student's academic and scholarly track record
- Priority will be given to PhD students
- Medical doctors enrolled in fellowship programs may also apply

TRC will screen the submitted proposals. If initially approved, TRC will create an account for the student in order to submit the full proposal through electronic portal (RIMS). TRC will rank all the received proposals from this group of students and will fund the top ranked proposals based on the available funds

### **7.3 Funding Regulations:**

1. The project should be fully completed within a maximum duration of two years
2. The total budget is capped at OMR 3,000/ project and should be used for expenses directly related to the completion of the project.

### **7.4 Agreement and Reporting:**

#### **1. Grant Agreement:**

If the submitted proposal is approved, a pledge agreement will be signed by both the grant-receiver and TRC, given that the funded research project will be successfully completed before the end of the postgraduate degree program. TRC will transfer the allocated budget in August/ September.

#### **2. Reports:**

At the end of the project, the student must submit a final report on RIMS.

### **8) Acknowledgment:**

Whenever achievements resulting from TRC funded projects are published (such as in journals, conferences, patents, presentations...etc.), RIs must acknowledge TRC's financial support. This may include a written acknowledgment and/ or the use of TRC's logo.

The recommended form of acknowledgment is:

*"The research leading to these results has received funding from the Research Council (TRC) of the Sultanate of Oman under the Block Funding Program. TRC Block Funding Agreement No [xxxxxx]"*

### **A Note to Research Institutes (RIs)**

**RIs are requested to refer to the main ‘Block Funding Guidelines’ as all the general institutional guidelines, policies and regulations are also applicable here.**

# Appendix

## Oman International Student Form Graduate Research Grant (GRG)



### 1) Applicant's Details:

Name	
College/ University	
Department/ Specialisation	
Degree	
Program's Start Date	
Expected Graduation Date	
Email	
Address	

### 2) Project's Details:

Title	
Field	
Total Duration	
Requested Budget (OMR)	
Expected Outcomes	

### 3) Supervisor's Details:

Name	
College/ University	
Department/ Specialisation	
Email	

**Student's Signature:**

**Supervisor's Signature:**

**Dean's Name:**

**Signature:**

**Official Stamp:**

**Date: ...../ ...../ .....**

## Clearance Letter

### To Whom It May Concern

I am Mr/Mrs.....studying  
MSC/PHD in University ..... in research area of ..... in proposal titled “  
..... . “ declare that I am not benefiting from government or industry funded  
scholarships in Oman for the current academic degree.

Student Name:

Student Signature: