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POSTGRADUATE STUDY RESEARCH GRANTS

PROCESS AND CRITERIA

Process for the Awarding of the Research Grants

The following steps shall be taken to ensure transparency in the awarding of the research grant:

1. The call for applications will be made through an announcement on, at minimum, the PainSA website, PainSA social media platforms, and to the PainSA membership via the email list. The call will be made in July each year, and applications will close on 31 August of the same year. Recipients will be informed of the outcome of the application process by 16 October of the same year. Funds will be made available from January of the following year, subject to the necessary documentation having been received from awardees.
2. The call for applications will invite applicants to complete the application form and provide the necessary accompanying documents. The call document will outline the criteria and obligations, as set out in this document, and provide details on the information and documents that must be submitted by an applicant in order to be considered.
3. An evaluation panel with a minimum of five members shall be nominated by Council to be available to review applications for the grants. The evaluation panel shall serve for a three-year period. The evaluation panel shall include the President of PainSA and the Chairs of the Education and Research Portfolios. The remaining members of the panel will be members of PainSA with experience in research. Conflicts of interest must be declared and appropriate steps taken to maintain objectivity. Not all members of the evaluation panel must be used to score applications each year (see item 7, below).
4. The Chair of the Research Portfolio shall conduct an initial review of all applicants for eligibility. Those applicants who are deemed ineligible on the basis of the initial review, as agreed upon by the evaluation panel, will immediately be informed of their ineligibility by the Chair of the Research Portfolio, and will not be considered for an award in that cycle.
5. At least two members (but preferably three, when conflicts of interest allow) of the evaluation panel shall independently review and score the eligible applicants against the predefined criteria (attached and published on the application portal). The same two or three reviewers shall review all applicants for a single grant, to ensure consistency of scoring across applicants. It is preferred that these two or three reviewers include one person with clinical expertise and one person with research expertise. Each reviewer will provide a separate score for the application. Each reviewer shall also provide independent, constructive qualitative comments on each application to inform the feedback that is given to applicants

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- after the review process. In light of the focus of the grants on building research capacity, the feedback should be structured to support stronger future applications for funding.
6. The evaluation panel shall discuss the scores and reviews of the applications, and select the applicant with the highest score.
 7. If the panel feels that there are no suitable applicants, then either no grants or only one of the grants will be awarded. In such an instance, the grant(s) may not be re-advertised until the next funding cycle, or the panel may agree to release a second call for that year;
 8. The evaluation process and awarding of the grants shall be considered and ratified by the Council of PainSA;
 9. For each grant, the Chair of the Research Portfolio will inform the council-approved awardees that they have been successful and refer them to the Secretary of PainSA to submit the necessary documents, including contractual acceptance of the grant conditions (as stipulated below). Should any of the awardees be unwilling or unable to meet the conditions of the grant, then the next potential awardee for that grant, in order of preference as specified in items 5-7, may be offered the grant.
 10. Only once a successful awardee has accepted the terms of the grant will unsuccessful applicants be informed of the decision and provided with feedback from the evaluation panel with the aim of facilitating future success in applications for this grant or other grants.
 11. The awardees of the research grants shall be announced via PainSA communication channels, including the PainSA website, and at the PainSA Congress.

Criteria for the Awarding of the Research Grants

The research grants will be awarded on the following criteria. Each item is scored out of the designated maximum. The score for each category is computed by adding the scores for the items within that category. The final score is computed by summing the scores for all categories into a total out of a maximum possible score of 50 (foundation-level grant) or 65 (doctoral grant).

Foundation-level research grant:

| Evidence (questions) | Evaluation Guidance | Weight |
|--|--|----------|
| Track record of commitment to pain research, education and training | | 5 |
| Participation in PainSA activities | One point awarded for each previous presentation of work at PainSA Congress, involvement with PainSA activities including serving on Council and/or PainSA Pain Academy activities, and/or delivering EPM training for PainSA. | 2 |
| Participation in pain research, education and training | One point awarded for each previous involvement in pain research, education and/or training. If an activity was for/through PainSA, award points again here. | 3 |
| Involvement in Research | | 5 |
| Previously published in journal listed by Pubmed, Scopus, and/or DHET | Yes = 2; no = 0 | 2 |

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| Participation in research studies (e.g., as researcher, or providing assistance to researchers, or on research panel) | One point for each contribution as researcher, of assistance to researchers, or on research panel. | 3 |
| Commitment to and potential for future career in research | | 10 |
| Research path | See CV for motivation explaining research path – why this study is being undertaken and how it will inform the applicant's future research plans. Scoring: 0-2 points allocated to rationale for the focus of the study (score for clarity) + 0-3 points allocated to the foundation that this study provides for the applicant's intended research path (score for relevance, clarity of path, potential of the applicant on completion of the proposed work) | 5 |
| Quality of two-page research synopsis or progress so far (if part of the way into studies) | Scoring if not part of the way into studies: 0-3 points allocated to research strategy (see study synopsis)(calibre of design and scientific writing) + 0-2 points allocated to recognition of limitations and need for growth & appropriate plans to manage them(see synopsis, CV, letters)(clarity & appropriateness) Scoring if part of the way into studies: 0-2 points allocated to research strategy (see study synopsis)(calibre of design and scientific writing) + 0-2 points allocated to recognition of limitations and need for growth & appropriate plans to manage them(see synopsis, CV, letters)(clarity & appropriateness) + 0-1 points for progress (publications not required; this item can be addressed qualitatively) | 5 |
| Likelihood of success with study programme | | 25 |
| Applied for and been accepted for honours or masters studies. Supervisor acceptance is sufficient. If in second year, evidence of protocol acceptance by department and appropriate ethics committee, as applicable | Yes = 3; No = 0 (reflection of intent) | 3 |

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| Conduciveness of the research environment | Consider the expertise of the supervisory team; coverage of research topic and methods. Topic experts should be involved as required. (See CV & letters) Scoring: 0-3 points allocated to supervisory team expertise, including specific topic expertise (See CV & letters) + 0-2 points allocated to institutional environment (facilities, collegial context, peer interaction) | 5 |
| Training plan | Training planned to address recognised growth needs. Realistic recognition of additional resources required. (See CV & letters) Scoring: 0-3 points allocated to articulation of growth needs (clarity, relevance to project) + 0-2 points allocated to training plan (relevance to needs, feasibility) + 0-2 points allocated to explicit support from supervisors, including for applicant's articulated training plan (See letters) | 7 |
| Time commitment | Adequate plans to set aside time for research and training programme to foster success. (See CV & letters) Scoring: 0-3 points allocated to regular time set aside for research (qualitative score in light of programme demand: likely inadequate to very likely adequate) + 0-2 points allocated to time blocked for training or other research processes (e.g. data collection, analysis, etc)(qualitative score in light of programme demand: likely inadequate to very likely adequate) | 5 |
| Feasibility of research plan | Assess budget plans; availability of co-funding if required; feasibility of recruitment/study schedule, etc. Scoring: 0-2 points allocated to feasibility of proposed research (recruitment, testing schedule, timing of training relative to research process, etc) + 0-3 points allocated to budgetary planning. Co-funding is allowed and encouraged. Multiple feasible sources of potential funding score higher. | 5 |
| Value of research | | 5 |
| Alignment of research with PainSA | Scoring: 0-2 points allocated to alignment with PainSA mission and objectives (see https://painsa.org.za/about-us/) | 2 |
| Value of research to society | Scoring: 0-3 points allocated to the contribution of the research project to the study and/or management of pain in South Africa | 3 |
| | TOTAL | 50 |

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Doctoral research grant:

| Evidence (questions) | Evaluation Guidance | Weight |
|--|--|---------------|
| Track record of commitment to pain research, education and training | | 5 |
| Participation in PainSA activities | One point awarded for each previous presentation of work at PainSA Congress, involvement with PainSA activities including serving on Council and/or PainSA Pain Academy activities, and/or delivering EPM training for PainSA. | 2 |
| Participation in pain research, education and training | One point awarded for each previous involvement in pain research, education and/or training. If an activity was for/through PainSA, award points again here. | 3 |
| Experience in research | | 10 |
| Previously published in journal listed by Pubmed, Scopus, and/or DHET | Yes = 2; no = 0 | 2 |
| Calibre and quantity of previous publications | Consider the number of publications and the applicant's role. In the event of a tie between applicants, the quality of the journal may be considered to distinguish between applicants within a grant category. Scoring: 0 - no publications, or only published in journals not accredited by DHET. 1 - 1 publication as co-author 2 - 1 publication as first/lead author OR >1 as co-author 3 - 1-2 publications as first/lead AND 1-2 as co-author 4 - More than 3 publications as first/lead author | 4 |
| Participation in research panels | One point for each membership of a (university/other) editorial board, activity as reviewer for DHET-accredited journals, membership of ethics or other research committees. | 2 |
| Participation in research studies (e.g., as researcher or providing assistance to researchers) | One point for each contribution as researcher, of assistance to researchers, or on research panel. | 2 |
| Commitment to and potential for future career in research | | 10 |
| Research path | See CV for motivation explaining research path – why this study is being undertaken and how it will inform the applicant's future research plans. Scoring: 0-2 points allocated to rationale for the focus of the study (score for clarity) | 5 |

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| | <p>+ 0-3 points allocated to the foundation that this study provides for the applicant's intended research path (score for relevance, clarity of path, potential of the applicant on completion of the proposed work)</p> | |
| Quality of research synopsis or progress so far (if part of the way into studies) | <p>Scoring if not part of the way into studies: 0-3 points allocated to research strategy (see study synopsis)(calibre of design and scientific writing) + 0-2 points allocated to recognition of limitations and need for growth & appropriate plans to manage them(see synopsis, CV, letters)(clarity & appropriateness)</p> <p>Scoring if part of the way into studies: 0-2 points allocated to research strategy (see study synopsis)(calibre of design and scientific writing) + 0-2 points allocated to recognition of limitations and need for growth & appropriate plans to manage them(see synopsis, CV, letters)(clarity & appropriateness) + 0-1 points for progress (publications not required; this item can be addressed qualitatively)</p> | 5 |
| Likelihood of success with doctoral programme | | 30 |
| Applied for and been accepted for doctoral studies. Supervisor acceptance is sufficient. If in second year, evidence of protocol acceptance by department and appropriate ethics committee, as applicable | Yes = 5; No = 0 (measuring intent) | 5 |
| Conduciveness of the research environment | <p>Consider the expertise of the supervisory team; coverage of research topic and methods. Topic experts should be involved as required. (See CV & letters) Scoring: 0-3 points allocated to supervisory team expertise, including specific topic expertise (See CV & letters) + 0-2 points allocated to institutional environment (facilities, collegial context, peer interaction)</p> | 5 |

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| Training plan | Training planned to address recognised growth needs. Realistic recognition of additional resources required. (See CV & letters) Scoring: 0-3 points allocated to articulation of growth needs (clarity, relevance to project) + 0-5 points allocated to training plan (relevance to needs, feasibility) + 0-2 points allocated to explicit support from supervisors, including for applicant's articulated training plan (See letters) | 10 |
| Time commitment | Adequate plans to set aside time for research and training programme to foster success. (See CV & letters) Scoring: 0-3 points allocated to regular time set aside for research (qualitative score in light of programme demand: likely inadequate to very likely adequate) + 0-2 points allocated to time blocked for training or other research processes (e.g. data collection, analysis, etc)(qualitative score in light of programme demand: likely inadequate to very likely adequate) | 5 |
| Feasibility of research plan | Assess budget plans; availability of co-funding if required; feasibility of recruitment/study schedule, etc. Scoring: 0-2 points allocated to feasibility of proposed research (recruitment, testing schedule, timing of training relative to research process, etc) + 0-3 points allocated to budgetary planning. Co-funding is allowed and encouraged. Multiple feasible sources of potential funding score higher. | 5 |
| Value of research | | 10 |
| Alignment of research with PainSA | Scoring: 0-2 points allocated to alignment with PainSA mission and objectives (see https://painsa.org.za/about-us/) | 2 |
| Value of research to society | Scoring: 0-3 points allocated to the contribution of the research project to the study and/or management of pain in South Africa | 3 |
| Potential of research to set applicant up for career in research | Will the research constitute a novel contribution to the literature? Will the research build priority research skills in the applicant? Scoring: 0-2 points allocated to the value of the anticipated, novel contribution of the project to the scientific literature + 0-3 points allocated to the potential of the programme to build high-priority research skills in the applicant. | 5 |
| TOTAL | | 65 |

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1. Approval

The Research Grant criteria and processes, as set out above, were approved by the Council of PainSA in July 2024.

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