



RACGP

Royal Australian College *of* General Practitioners

Education Research Grants

EOI and applications guide for RTOs

2018-2019

Contents

Instructions for applicants	3
RACGP Contacts.....	3
Program Objectives	4
Selection Criteria	5
Eligibility	5
Meets program objectives.....	5
Research proposal.....	6
Research goal and research question/s.	6
Research objectives.....	6
Background, purpose and critical appraisal of the literature.....	7
Research design and method	7
Ethical considerations.....	7
Collaboration	8
Project governance and management	8
Project budget	9
Funding Principles	10
Project funding	10
Application Process	11
Application stages	11
Program timelines/ milestones.....	12
Resource Ownership	13
Physical resources	13
Data and information	13
Appendix: GP Training Policy Research Priorities.....	14
1. Competency and its measurement in GP training	14
2. Educational quality and its measurement.....	14
3. GP training: workforce and sustainability	14
4. Outcomes of training.....	16
5. Workplace training: optimising the experience	16

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICANTS

RACGP has revised the 2018 - 2019 application guide and application form so that both contain more information regarding the standard required by the Academic Assessment Panel. RACGP would also like to assist applicants with less research experience to submit an application. We encourage applicants to refer to this guide when completing the application form.

Applications will again be submitted via the Smarty Grants online portal, however to assist with preparation RTOs will be given access to a word version of the application form which they can distribute to their teams for input and then transcribe into the Smarty Grants form.

Please refer to the Application Process on page 11 for further information.

RACGP will provide a link to the Smarty Grants portal on the RACGP website prior to the opening of submissions. The submission window is Monday 5 February to Wednesday 14 March 2018. Refer to page 12 for the program timelines.

[https://www.racgp.org.au/becomingaggp/australian-general-practice-training-program-\(agpt\)/education-research-grants/](https://www.racgp.org.au/becomingaggp/australian-general-practice-training-program-(agpt)/education-research-grants/)

RACGP CONTACTS

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PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Education Research Grants (ERGs) Program aims to build research capability in medical education and training. ERGs provide an opportunity for Regional Training Organisations (RTOs) to establish, develop and maintain research partnerships with primary health care academic institutions in their training footprint. RTOs must ensure direct involvement of the University's General Practice Department, Primary Health Care Department or equivalent in the ERG.

ERG 2018 – 2019 aims to continue to build research capability with a specific focus on education improvement. The overarching objective is to develop evidence-based education initiatives that increase training capacity and improve educational outcomes, specifically:

- Exploration of innovative education models with a view to building sustainable training capacity;
- Identification, implementation and evaluation of new and existing education improvement initiatives suitable for regionalised primary care settings;
- Building the knowledge base for education improvement through increased research activities and publications and promoting collaboration and engagement of RTOs in research and development initiatives directly relating to education improvement.

The RACGP will facilitate a number of research support activities during the ERG term to ensure the attainment of program objectives. There is an expectation that ERG grantees participate in these activities.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection criteria address the three essential project components:

- A relevant educational issue or problem identified by an RTO;
- Academic input on how best to research that problem; and
- A robust research design and project plan.

Eligibility

RTO-led project with a clear academic institution partnership. The application must demonstrate:

- Participation by RTO staff;
- A commitment to participate in support activities; and
- Direct involvement of the University's General Practice Department, Primary Health Care Department or equivalent.

Meets program objectives

1. Builds Research Capacity

- Demonstrate how the research project will develop research capacity within the RTO. Where external contractors perform significant roles in the research, explain how their input will translate to increasing research capacity within the RTO.

2. Builds on the GP training knowledge base:

- Focus on at least one of the Department of Health's GP Training Policy research priorities in the context of the Rebuilding GP Training initiative;
- Demonstrate how the project is relevant to national GP education and training;
- Demonstrate implications for training; and
- Demonstrate commitment to dissemination of the results to the broader RTO community and academic departments of General Practice or Primary Health Care, including publishing in peer-reviewed journals.

Applicants are required to identify how their proposal meets the program objectives, who will benefit from the project and how the findings will be disseminated.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Applicants must clearly articulate the identified gap in the existing knowledge and how their proposal will address this gap. The ERG application form requires applicants to respond to the items below.

Research goal and research question/s.

Research questions should be concise. The questions would normally be refined after the critical appraisal of the literature and the method design, but typically they are stated at the beginning of a proposal. The background is explained elsewhere.

Each question should define:

- the study population;
- the intervention or problem;
- any comparison group; and
- the outcome of interest within a timeframe.

e.g. How does asthma management for pregnant women impact on pregnancy outcomes?

- study population = pregnant women who are being treated for asthma
- intervention = the provision of an asthma management plan
- comparison group = those who engage in the plan against those who do not
- outcome = health of mother and/or baby and timeframe is set by pregnancy.

Research objectives

Research objectives should be SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound. They should have defined key performance indicators. Throughout the term, successful applicants will be required to report on progression towards the achievement of research objectives.

Research objectives should:

- link to the research question;
- define a specific aim of the study and identify an outcome measure (description, definition, measurement etc.); and
- begin with an action verb, followed by the subject content e.g. To describe ...; To define ...; To measure

Note: Research objectives are NOT project tasks.

For the earlier research question the objectives may be:

- to describe and measure the use of asthma management plans by pregnant women seen in general practice
- to measure pregnancy outcomes for women who have been treated for asthma in general practice.
- to determine the impact of an active asthma management plan on pregnancy outcomes
- to make recommendations regarding the engagement of pregnant women in the use of active asthma management plans.

Background, purpose and critical appraisal of the literature

Explain the motivation for the research. How was the gap in knowledge identified?

Literature search and appraisal:

- Identify literature specific to the research topic. Include a statement of the criteria used in searching e.g. Time-period (years of literature relevant to the topic), sources.
- Critically appraise the literature and identify valuable contributions to the field, study limitations and identify gaps in the literature that you hope to address with your research.
- Review current practice (environmental scan) specific to the research topic.
- Provide a reference list.

Note: we are aware that there are strict limits on the word count in the application form, however applicants should be aware that a concise literature review is required for publication so the ability to summarise the relevant information on the form is part of the assessment process. Use referencing to direct the reviewer to further information.

Research design and method

Applicants must outline the methodology and explain how the design is appropriate to answer the research question. Where the research links to other projects – either existing or proposed – clearly explain the relationship and boundaries. How will your research add to the project, or how will it differ?

Include justifications for:

- the choice of design;
- the number of participants; and
- sample size calculations etc.

Ethical considerations

Applicants must demonstrate an understanding of the ethical issues that may arise from the project and risk mitigation requirements. It is the responsibility of the Lead Investigator to ensure the conduct of the project complies with all HREC requirements. Refer to the National Health and Medical Research Council Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/e72>. Include a statement regarding the ethical issues you have identified, and how you will address each of these. We encourage applicants to liaise with an HREC before submitting their application, especially to check the level of risk.

Be sure to consider:

- process of obtaining consent, especially where a power imbalance may exist;
- involvement of vulnerable groups. In the ERG context this could be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, or cultural and linguistically diverse populations;
- protection of data and privacy; and
- the appropriate use of reimbursements.

Standard rate of reimbursement provided directly to GP participants is approximately \$125; however, RACGP strongly advises researchers to instead engage with and compensate their participants' GP clinics for the loss of staff time.

Note: it is not sufficient to say that an ethics committee has already approved the project. Applicants must provide full details to indicate that the ethical issues have been adequately considered.

The process of ethical review with any Human Research Ethics Committee often takes longer than anticipated, so be sure to allow adequate time in the work plan. Applicants may apply to the RACGP national ethics committee for approval for their research.

Collaboration

RACGP strongly encourages RTOs to consider partnering with other RTOs on ERG projects, to enable comparisons and facilitate mentoring. RTOs are encouraged to consider engaging former academic registrars in the research project where possible.

As per the eligibility criteria, the RTO must partner with a general practice or primary health care department within a recognised academic institution. The university partner must have direct and ongoing involvement in the project and provide substantial input into the application, including peer review. The role of the university partner is to mentor the RTO and ensure the application and project are of good quality.

RTOs may also collaborate with other relevant organisations; however, the RTO must have a substantial role in research design, reporting and dissemination. The application form asks for a description of how the collaboration will facilitate research capacity building within the RTO.

Project governance and management

Demonstrate a clear project governance structure and identification of whom the project team will report to within the RTO. As ERGs are awarded to RTOs, the RTO must nominate an RTO staff member to be responsible for liaison with the RACGP regarding grantee obligations including reporting. RTOs must inform RACGP of any delegation of these obligations.

- Clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of the project team. Ensure to designate a Lead Investigator and a Project Manager. The roles may be given to one person.
- Clearly identify milestones and timelines, identify risks with mitigation strategies and contingency plans.

You must ensure that your timelines fit within the reporting requirements for the grant – see Program timelines/ milestones on page 12.

Project budget

Provide a project budget that is consistent with the funding inclusions and exclusions as provided in the next section. RACGP will consider funding up to \$150,000 for each successful applicant. Applicants must ensure they can complete the project within the proposed budget. If you have funding from another source, RACGP will ask you to identify this and explain how you will use the contribution.

Be sure to:

- include full details to justify each expense;
- make sure that allowance for salaries and consultants includes the hours employed/engaged over the term and is consistent with the information given in the roles and responsibilities table; and
- include publication costs if applicable, providing the expense will be incurred before the end of the financial grant reconciliation.

FUNDING PRINCIPLES

Funding will be provided to RTO led research teams to undertake research, develop or evaluate one of the education research priorities outlined in the Department of Health's GP Training Policy research priorities (Appendix One). Project teams may also apply for funding from the Australian College for Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM); however, applicants must indicate they have done so on the application form. Applicants must not accept funding offers from both Colleges.

Project funding

RACGP will make project funding available to RTOs over the 2018 – 2019 financial year. Individual project funding is capped at \$150,000 (exclusive of GST). RACGP will only consider funding applications meeting the selection criteria and application requirements.

Funding inclusions:

- salaries for staff undertaking the project;
- travel and meeting costs;
- data analysis and data transcriptions; and
- reasonable recruitment incentives – refer to the guidance provided under ethical review section.

Funding exclusions:

- non-specific administrative overheads;
- expenses incurred beyond the project funding period;
- ongoing costs associated with resource management and maintenance beyond the project completion date;
- physical infrastructure/contribution to large capital projects; or
- subscriptions or memberships.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The RACGP will run an Expression of Interest (EOI) process prior to applications opening. The EOI submission window is 15 January to 2 February 2018. RACGP encourages potential ERG applicants to submit an EOI form to the RACGP. This process assists the RACGP to gauge interest in the grants, communicate important information to applicants, and provide an opportunity for applicants to discuss their proposed project to ensure it fits within the guidelines. The RACGP will also offer a webinar to interested groups to discuss the process, scheduled for Monday 12 February 2018 at 6.30pm.

Applications for ERGs open immediately after the EOI process has concluded. The application submission window is 5 February to 14 March 2018. Applicants must address the Selection Criteria as detailed in the previous section. Applicants must submit their application via the online grants program software – Smarty Grants. The link to Smarty Grants will be available on the RACGP website once applications are open. Any member of the research team including collaborators may prepare the submission on behalf of the RTO; however, they must provide evidence of support from the RTO by an authorized person. The relevant RACGP webpage:

[https://www.racgp.org.au/becomingagp/australian-general-practice-training-program-\(agpt\)/education-research-grants/](https://www.racgp.org.au/becomingagp/australian-general-practice-training-program-(agpt)/education-research-grants/)

The RACGP Education Research Academic Assessment Panel (AAP) evaluates all applications at a special panel meeting.

Application stages

1. *Project development:* Project leads (RTOs) develop a research proposal and project plan in consultation with relevant stakeholders. This will need to address the selection criteria and be completed using the ERG 2018-2019 Application Form on Smarty Grants
2. *Project assessment:* The AAP will review individual projects. The panel will consist of staff with expertise in research and project management and external subject matter expert/s. Where required, the panel will seek further clarification from applicants before making a final decision.
3. *Project notification:* RACGP will issue funding agreements and allocate funding directly to RTOs to co-ordinate and manage project implementation.

PROGRAM TIMELINES/ MILESTONES

Milestone	Timeframe
Request for ERG Expressions of Interest	15 January to 2 February 2018
Pre-application webinar	12 February 2018
ERG applications open for submission	5 February to 14 March 2018
Assessment of applications by ERG Academic Assessment Panel	March/April 2018
Application outcomes provided to RTOs	7 – 21 May 2018
Contracts executed	June 2018
Individual projects commence	1 July 2018
First ERG workshop	GP18 – TBC
First progress report due	10 Oct 2018
First ERG webinar	TBC
Mid-term progress report due	10 Jan 2019
Second ERG workshop	TBC
Second ERG webinar	TBC
Final administrative report due	10 July 2019
Final research findings report due	10 July 2019
Final reconciliation report due, projects completed	10 July 2019

RESOURCE OWNERSHIP

Physical resources

Where the RTO procures resources on the basis that they are to be shared between project collaborators, the RTO shall bear responsibility for maintaining the resources, and the provision of a clear plan for usage and access by all relevant training practices.

Data and information

Data and information collected in the course of this project will be the property of the RTO. The RTO must make available results and outcomes, and general information collected (including literature review and environmental scans) for the RACGP's use, in the context of program policy development and publishing.

The RACGP – RTO funding agreement for ERGs specifies that the RTO owns the Intellectual Property (IP) but grants a perpetual license to the RACGP to use its IP rights. The license to the RACGP includes a right to sub-license to DoH.

APPENDIX: GP TRAINING POLICY RESEARCH PRIORITIES

In 2014, the GP training sector and key general practice stakeholders determined the following research priorities and associated topics for Education Research Grants.

1. Competency and its measurement in GP training

Rationale

The RACGP standards for Education and Training require demonstration of assessment of competence, prior to the commencement of GPT1, and throughout training. This is not a new expectation; however, it can be difficult within an RTO to develop a well-validated and reliable tool to measure competence: the concepts are inherently complex, and the cohort size of a single RTO is small.

Research topics

Within this research area, the following topics (which relate to recent Fellows) have been identified:

- Exploring tools to assess competence prior to GP training
- Exploring tools to assess competence during GP training.

2. Educational quality and its measurement

Rationale

Educational quality is difficult to measure: the field of general practice is broad and diverse, registrars enter the program with different skill sets and learning needs, and interventions are layered and complex. Nevertheless, it is essential that we develop tools to measure quality in GP education and training, particularly around the areas that are difficult to assess using quantitative outcome measures such as the Fellowship exams.

Research topics

Within this research area, the following topics have been identified:

- Current practice in education quality measurement and quality improvement
- Educational evaluation
- Program evaluation
- Measuring educational impact on clinical behaviour (this topic could include a series of projects targeting specific educational interventions).

3. GP training: workforce and sustainability

Rationale

The medical educator and supervisor workforce across the Australian General Practice Training (AGPT) program is diverse and mobile, with many GPs taking multiple clinical and educational roles. In order to

sustain an effective and skilled workforce, the Department of Health's GP Training Policy section would like to better understand the characteristics of these GPs. There has already been some research undertaken in this area, including Education Integration Projects, and the Department of Health's GP Training Policy section does not wish to duplicate these activities. However, novel approaches that contribute to an understanding of this complex topic should be considered.

Research topics

This priority area has been divided into two sections, understanding current workforce and planning future workforce. Topics within these two areas are set out below.

UNDERSTANDING CURRENT WORKFORCE

- Medical Educator demographics
- GP Supervisor demographics
- Medical Educator activities and responsibilities
- GP Supervisor activities and responsibilities
- Medical Educator work arrangements
- GP Supervisor work arrangements
- Cultural Educator demographics
- Cultural Mentor demographics
- Cultural Educator activities and responsibilities
- Cultural Mentor activities and responsibilities
- Cultural Educator work arrangements
- Cultural Mentor work arrangements.

PLANNING FUTURE WORKFORCE

- Incentives, motivators and barriers to becoming a Medical Educator
- Incentives, motivators and barriers to becoming a GP Supervisor
- Incentives, motivators and barriers to becoming a Cultural Educator
- Incentives, motivators and barriers to becoming a Cultural Mentor
- Career pathways for Medical Educators
- Career pathways for GP Supervisors
- Career pathways for Cultural Educators
- Career pathways for Cultural Mentors
- Becoming a training practice
- Investigation of alternate models of in-practice training
- Exploring the consultant GP Supervisor model (supervisor funded to oversee multiple learners per session rather than take patient bookings)

4. Outcomes of training

Rationale

At the completion of AGPT, some RTOs conduct exit interviews. However, there is currently little follow-up to determine whether training meets the needs of GPs in the early years of Fellowship. In recent years, there has been some discussion amongst registrars around the need for mentorship in these early years of clinical practice. General practice is also becoming increasingly more complex, with a range of higher order skills required. Skills such as critical thinking, team management and business planning may be 'squeezed out' of the crowded curriculum during GP training. If we are to adapt the program to meet the needs of these recent Fellows, we need to determine what could be incorporated into GP training, and what could be offered as Continuing Professional Development to early Fellows.

Research topics

Within this research area, the following topics have been identified:

- Aspects of training most valuable to future work as a GP
- Gaps in training identified through work as a GP
- Gaps in clinical experience identified through work as a GP.

5. Workplace training: optimising the experience

Rationale

The apprenticeship model of training is historically core to the education of future GPs. However, the experience is rich and diverse, and we know little about how learning occurs in this context. Most training organisations capture the content of workshops arranged during GP placement. It is less clear what occurs during 'ad hoc' supervision.

Research topics

Within this research area, the following topics have been identified:

- The need for a core curriculum for GP Supervisors
- Professional development for GP Supervisors
- Professional development for Medical Educators
- Professional development for Cultural Educators
- Professional development for Cultural Mentors
- Changes in clinical experience as training progresses.