

**Biomedical Research Council
Science and Engineering Research Council
Joint Council Office
ETPL**

**GUIDELINES FOR
MANAGING
A*STAR GRANTS**



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INTRODUCTION

This document should be used as a guide for Principal Investigators (PIs) and Co-Investigators (Co-Is)/ Programme Managers (PMs) to apply for and manage their BMRC/SERC/JCO/ETPL grants.

For *quick reference*, you may refer to the:

- list of Non-Fundable items in the Annex 1a (p. 6)
- checklist for Grant Applications in Annex 1b (p. 12)
- budget template for Grant Applications in Annex 1c (p. 14)
- checklist for Grant Recipients in Annex 2 (p. 16)

In general, PI/Co-Is/PM should take reference from and comply with the Terms and Conditions under which their BMRC/SERC/JCO/ETPL grants have been awarded.

The PI/Co-Is/PM should contact BMRC, SERC, JCO or ETPL if they require further clarifications.

This document is strictly confidential.

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Matters to resolve before proceeding with research

Approvals from Ethics Committees

1. A copy of the necessary approval from the relevant board and committees must be sent to Grantor. Failure to do so will delay the disbursement of funds.

Research Collaboration Agreements

2. The Investigators are responsible for putting in place research collaboration agreements where and when applicable.

Disbursement of funds

3. A list of non-fundable direct cost items is provided in the Annex 1a. Only items specified in the approved budget will be funded.
4. All expenditure should be incurred (based on invoice date) before the end of the Term.
5. In general, prudence should be exercised for all project costs.

EOM

6. Funding of research staff under the grant must comply with prevailing and consistently applied human resource guidelines of the employing Host/Partner Institution(s), regardless of the source of funds.
7. For manpower-related fund requisitions, update of all staff employed under the project must be provided, including those whose employment has ended.
8. All hiring Institutions (Host or Partner) and the hiring supervisor PI/Co-Is/PM shall employ or otherwise engage Research Assistants/ Research Technicians or staff of equivalent qualifications who are Singapore citizens and/or Singapore Permanent Residents to be deployed in the work under the Research. For the purposes of this Clause 8, the term "Research Assistants" or "Research Technicians" or staff of equivalent qualifications shall mean research technicians, or staff of equivalent qualifications who participate in the Research by performing mainly technical tasks as well as providing support functions distinct from the work carried out by the Investigators. Whilst Research Assistants/ Research Technicians may provide intellectual input to the Research, they are not required to be directly involved in the management of the Research or for providing leadership in the conception and creation of new knowledge, products, processes, methods and systems under the Research. At the point of entry, Research Assistants/ Research Technicians will typically not be required to possess PhD qualifications. For clarification, "Research Assistants" will not include nurses and other hospital workers whom may assist in the Research.

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9. In the event the PI is unable to comply with Clause 8 above, the PI must seek prior approval of the Grantor with proper justification and can only employ staff of other nationality if the request is supported.
10. For Research Fellows, the Institutions shall use reasonable efforts to employ or otherwise engage Singapore citizens or Singapore permanent residents unless the required expertise is not available or the skill of any foreign person is necessary for the performance of the Research.

Equipment and Other Operating Expenses (OOE)

11. Only items specified and approved in the Letter of Award will be funded by Grantor.
12. All items claimed must comply with the Institution's internal procurement processes, guidelines and policies.
13. Grantor's approval must be sought prior to purchasing new equipment/OOE items that is not in the approved budget.
14. Grantor reserves the right to reject variation requests made retrospectively for equipment/OOE not listed in the Letter of Award.

Overseas Travel Related Expenses

15. It is the responsibility of the Lead PI/Co-Is to ensure that all travel expenses are in line with the Institutions' consistently applied policy on travel, regardless of the source of funds. The Host Institution and Partner Institutions are to ensure that any travel undertaken is in relation to the grant only and for no other purpose.

Indirect Costs

16. Indirect costs in research are those costs that are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified readily and specifically with a particular sponsored project, but contribute to the ability of the Institutions to support research projects and programmes. In other words, indirect costs are generally incurred through providing research space and administering the activities, not through the actual performance of the activities under the sponsored projects.
17. The Grantor does not directly manage indirect cost funding. PIs should refer to their Host Institutions for their policy of managing indirect cost funding.

Performance Bonus

18. Claims for staff performance bonus should be submitted within 6 months following the end of the Term. For Host Institutions that practise accrual of performance bonus according to its finance policy, balance funds should either be returned or claimed within 6 months if the pay-out comes after the end of the Term.

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Requests for variations to the awarded grant

19. Grantor reserves the right to reject any claims that have resulted from project changes without prior approval from Grantor (in specific circumstances as stated in these guidelines).
20. Request for any variation should be made before the last 3 months of the original end of the Term. Retrospective variation requests will not be allowed, unless there is compelling justification for submission of a late variation request.

Virement between Votes

21. Grantor delegates the approval authority for the virement of funds between votes to the Host Institution, subject to a cumulative amount not exceeding 10% of the original total project direct cost value. For virements cumulatively above 10%, the approval authority remains as the Grantor.
22. Any virement into the EOM vote would require Grantor's approval, even if the cumulative amount is below 10% of the original total project value.
23. Inter-institutional virements require the Grantor's approval and acknowledgement from the director of research (or equivalent) for all Institutions involved.
24. Virement of funds into the Overseas Travel sub-vote is not allowed. Overspending will not be reimbursed.

EOM

25. Grantor delegates the approval authority for manpower changes (i.e. increase/decrease in headcount, change in designation or scheme of projected hires, change in time commitment to the grant) to the Host Institution. Any virement into the EOM vote will require Grantor's approval. Updates should be provided when the fund requisition form is submitted to the Grantor.

Grant Extension

26. Request for grant extension should be made before the last 6 months of the original end of the Term. The PI must ensure sufficient funds in each vote to support the extension request. Any variation requests necessary to meet the extension period must be made known as part of the extension request.
27. A one-off project extension should not be more than a total of 6 months. An extension beyond 6 months will require compelling justification. No additional funds should be given for any extensions.

Change in Lead PI/Co-Is

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28. Request for a change in the Lead PI/Co-Is must be made to Grantor and be endorsed by the grant administrative office of the existing and new Host Institutions. The new Lead PI/Co-Is must be an expert in that area and possess the necessary expertise to continue with the research work.

Audit and Progress Reports

Yearly Audit Report

29. The Host Institution is required to submit a Yearly Audit Report of the preceding financial year ending 31 March, by 30 Sept of each year.
30. The Yearly Audit Report must be prepared by each Institution's internal or external auditors and certified by the director of research (or an authorised nominee).
31. The Yearly Audit Report should confirm that the Host Institution's requisitions are made in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of a Competitive Grant, and Guidelines.

Yearly Progress Report

32. The Host Institution is required to submit a Yearly Progress Report within 2 months from the end of the Financial Year (by 31 May). The requirement to submit a Yearly Progress Report is waived if the project start date is less than 3 months from the end of the FY.
33. These reports may be reviewed by an appointed review panel to assess the progress of the project. Investigators may also be invited to make a presentation of their research findings/progress to the Grantor's appointed review panel. Investigators may be required to give additional information about the progress of any grant if the information submitted is deemed to be inadequate.

Final Progress Report

34. The Host Institution is required to submit a Final Progress Report within 3 months following the end of the Term. Investigators may be required to make a presentation on the completed project to the Grantor's appointed review panel to ensure that the project has been completed satisfactorily.

Final Statement of Account

35. The Host Institution is required to submit a Final Statement of Account within 6 months following the end of the Term.

Debarring of Investigators

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36. Investigators who fail to submit the Final Progress Report and/or Final Statement of Account within the stipulated timelines at paragraphs 33 and 34 will be debarred. Debarred Investigators will not be eligible to submit new grant applications for a minimum of 1 year starting from the end of the respective deadlines. The period of ineligibility will continue until the Final Progress Report and/or Final Statement of Account are submitted to Grantor.

NON-FUNDABLE DIRECT COSTS

1. EOM Related Expenses

Type of Expenses	Description
General policy	<p>The general principle is that grants should support EOM costs and related benefits (as per employment contract) as long as it is in line with the consistently applied Host Institution’s HR policies.</p> <p>This will extend to Host Institution policies that govern staff recruitment and related costs (e.g. costs associated with the onboarding of staff, staff insurance, overtime claims, staff relocation, employment benefits, employment levy, employment pass, pre-examination medical check-up and housing allowance.)</p> <p>All Manpower related costs that fall under Other Operating Costs (OOE) should be accurately reflected in the Budget.</p> <p>Fractional charging for staff costs based on time commitment to the project must be practised.</p>
Principal Investigators / Co-Investigators / Programme Managers EOM cost	Generally not allowable, unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by the Grantor such that Host Institution may charge EOM attributed to the effort level as stated in the Letter of Award to the grant.
Unconsumed leave	Provision for unconsumed leave is not allowable.
Postgraduate stipend and tuition support	Not allowable, unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by Grantor.
Student Assistants / Interns	<p>Not allowable for students who are recipients of existing awards (or stipends) or students who are not residents of Singapore.</p> <p>Only full-time students enrolled in local institutes of higher learning qualify to be supported as a student assistant/intern.</p>

2. Equipment Related Expenses

Type of Expenses	Description
General policy	<p>No purchase of equipment is allowed unless specifically provided for in the grant approved by the Grantor.</p> <p>The procurement of such equipment must be made according to the formal established and consistently applied policies of the Host Institution.</p> <p>The invoices for all claims must be dated before the end of the Term.</p>
Cost of capital works, general infrastructure, general purpose IT and communication equipment, office equipment, and furniture and fittings	<p>Not allowable under direct costs, unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by Grantor. Examples of such costs are computers, office productivity software, PDAs, mobile phones, photocopier machines, workstations, printers, etc.</p>

3. OOE Related Expenses

Type of Expenses	Description
General policy	Not allowable for expenses that are <u>not directly related</u> to the Research. All procurement of such items must be made according to the formal established and consistently applied policies of the Host Institution.
Visiting Professors/Experts	Not allowable unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by the Grantor. The visiting professor must be identified and his/her contribution to the project must be clearly defined and described in the proposal.
Audit fees	Not allowable. This includes both internal and external audit fees.
Entertainment & Refreshment	Not allowable.
Fines and Penalties	Not allowable.
Legal Fees	Not allowable.
Overhead Expenses	Not allowable unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by the Grantor based on the nature of the research. This includes rental, utilities, facilities management, telephone charges, internet charges, etc.
Patent Application	Not allowable. This includes patent application filing, maintenance and other related cost.
Professional Membership Fees	Not allowable. This applies to PI and Co-Investigators as well as all research staff funded from the grant.
Software	Not allowable under direct cost unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by the Grantor.
Professional fees (including fees to consultants)	Not allowable unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by the Grantor.
Staff retreat	Not allowed.

4. Overseas Travel Related Expenses

Type of Expenses	Description
General policy	<p>Not allowable unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by the Grantor.</p> <p>Conference participation should be directly relevant to the research area outlined in the project and necessary to accomplish project objectives.</p> <p>All travel must align to the existing and consistently applied institutions' travel policies regardless of the source of funds.</p>

Checklist for Grant Applications

1. Before you begin writing your grant application, familiarize yourself with the grant non-fundables list, grant T&Cs and grant application form.
2. Establish deadlines for the preparation of the grant application, particularly when collaborating investigators are involved. Be aware of your internal RI/ collaborator institutional deadlines that could delay your application.
3. If possible, find someone in your institution that can assist you in completing the application. Please activate your designated HR/Finance/Admin personnel to assist you with budgetary figures in your application where necessary.
4. It is recommended that you check your applications for any plagiarism (including self-plagiarism) using appropriate tools before submission.

Please use this checklist as a guide, to assist you with administrative aspects of your grant. Please refer to Annex 1c for the grant budgeting guide.

Description	Areas To check
Investigator's institutional affiliations	<p>As monies will flow to the respective investigators institutions, careful attention must be paid to the investigators institutional affiliation. This would affect those with multiple appointments.</p> <p>As a general guide, it should reflect where the work will be done, and where most resources will need to be used to complete the project.</p>
Space for proposed project	<p>Has space in your RI (office, lab, storage) been identified to support your proposed project?</p>
Ethics Approvals and Clearances	<p>Direct Research: (E.g. Clinical studies where subjects are being recruited.)</p> <p>Indirect Human Biomedical Research (E.g. Research that uses human specimens / data.)</p> <p>Has the equivalent ethics board approvals been applied for?</p>
Animal Experimentation/ Research	<p>Has the equivalent IRB / IACUC been applied for?</p>

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Please refer to Annex 1c for further details

Description	Areas to Check
Budgeting	<p>Have your budgets adhered to the list of non-fundables and grant T&Cs?</p> <p>Have budgets which are indicated as non-allowable unless specifically budgeted for in the grant, been included? (Ref. to list of non-fundables)</p>
Consideration of In-kind/Institutional Funding	<p>Grant funding may only be able to support part of your total research costs.</p> <p>Have you considered what costs are to be paid for with grant monies and what costs will be met by the respective institutions? (Core budgets/in kind resources)?</p>
Manpower Costs (EOM)	<p>Have you consulted your HR department/ have you budgeted for the full salary package of an existing/new headcount in your grant?</p>
Equipment Costs (EQPT)	<p>If budgeting for new EQPT have the following points been thought through?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) <i>Budget/space for EQPT</i>2) <i>Consideration of shared EQPT to use for project within RI/A*STAR.</i>3) <i>Maintenance costs of EQPT? (OOE)</i>4) <i>Additional licenses needed to run the EQPT? (OOE)</i>
Consumables Costs (OOE)	<p>OOE: Have direct and indirect/non-R&D research costs been adequately thought through?</p> <p><i>E.g. of indirect costs - overheads, sample courier costs</i></p>

Budget template for Grant Applications

The budget template provided below consists of categories that should be considered when filling out a grant budget. Pls may use this as a reference and adapt this to budget templates provided to you for various grant types.

Category	Amount Requested (\$)					Useful guidelines
	Qty/%	Year 1(\$)	Year 2(\$)	Year 3(\$)	Total	
EOM						<i>Grants will support EOM costs and related benefits. It is important to outline this carefully at the grant application stage You should include TOTAL package costs in these projections. Approach your HRPs for assistance.</i>
<i>Post- Doctoral Fellows</i>	100%					
<i>Research Assistants</i>	100%					
<i>Student assistant stipends</i>						
EQPT						<i>Non-R&D items are generally NON-FUNDABLE. If you need these to be covered under your grant, these must be reflected.</i>
R&D						
<i>R&D Software license (License period more than 1 year)</i>						
non R&D						
<i>IT equipment (includes laptops)</i>						
<i>Capital works & general infrastructure</i>						
OOE						<i>To support EOM related OOE costs. Approach your HRPs for assistance.</i>
<i>Manpower Related Costs</i>						
<i>Courier of samples</i>						
<i>Publication costs</i>						
<i>Maintenance costs</i>						
<i>Local Training/ Local Conference</i>						<i>Please include local training and local conference engagements here.</i>
<i>Overhead charges</i>						<i>Not allowable unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by the Council. If necessary to meet project needs, please outline any Rental, Utilities, Telephone or internet charges.</i>

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<i>R&D Software (license period of 1 year or less)</i>						<i>Not allowable unless specifically provided for in the grant and approved by the Council. Software licenses, if approved, should be only for the duration of the project.</i>
<i>Product liability insurance</i>						<i>If applicable</i>
<i>License fees</i>						<i>Specific medical check-ups that are required to operate equipment</i>
<i>Equipment usage charges</i>						
OOE – Overseas/Local Conference expenses and Overseas Travel						
<i>Presentation of work at overseas conferences</i>						<i>No monies can be vired into the travel vote if the grant is awarded.</i>
<i>Overseas training or meeting of overseas collaborators</i>						
Grand Total						

Checklist for Grant Recipients

This checklist is to assist PIs in collating complete documents and information for submission of request of funds to A*STAR as detailed in Sections 2-18. (For grants that do not submit the requests electronically)

Description	Required documents to be submitted to A*STAR	Areas to check
Funds Requisition Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funds Requisition Form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> All fields duly completed? <input type="checkbox"/> Signed by PI¹ and Finance personnel appointed by the Host Institution? <p>¹ <i>Signatory should be the same as the LOA</i></p>
Virement of Budget	Approval memo / letter for budget virement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Approved by appropriate authority?
Manpower Listing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Manpower Listing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Required details stated? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - name - designation - institution - start date of employment - end date of employment - nationality - country - proportion of time spent (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> No. of staff and their positions are as per Letter of Award / Approval letter? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If not, to check with PI whether approval had been obtained for headcount variation.
EOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expenditure listing ▪ Explanation for fluctuation of EOM cost <i>(if applicable)</i> ▪ To state name of staff who incur medical checkup costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Any fluctuations in salary, CPF and/or bonus expenses?

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Description	Required documents to be submitted to A*STAR	Areas to check
OOE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expenditure listing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate description of items stated in the expenditure listing? <input type="checkbox"/> Any purchase not fundable as per the List of Non-Fundable direct costs?
OOE maintenance cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Period of maintenance stated? <input type="checkbox"/> Name of equipment stated?
OOE – travel cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Travel costs incurred by PI and/or staff employed under the grant and/or students presenting paper specific to this grant project? <input type="checkbox"/> Clearly specified in cover letter or expenditure listing? <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate description of costs incurred, such as per-diem, airfare, accommodation etc provided? <input type="checkbox"/> Details of conference, such as name, date, place etc provided?
Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To attach the list of equipment purchased under the grant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate description of items stated in the expenditure listing? <input type="checkbox"/> Equipment stated in original grant proposal?