

2027 Rebecca Cooper Fellowship Application Guidelines

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The Rebecca Cooper Fellowship (*"Fellowship"*) is a prestigious award named in honour of the late Rebecca Lillian Cooper, who generously endowed her entire estate to establish The Rebecca L Cooper Medical Research Foundation. The Fellowship is targeted at Mid-Career researchers who have established a strong research program and are on track to become leaders in their chosen area of Medical Research.

Funding

The award of The Rebecca Cooper Fellowship provides a salary component of \$220,000 per annum (exclusive of GST) and a Research Support Package (*"RSP"*) of \$80,000 per annum (exclusive of GST), for a period of five years commencing 1 January 2027.

The Fellowship supports salary and [direct research costs](#); the two cannot be separated.

The Administering Institution (*"Institution"*) must agree to meet any additional employment-related expenses for the recipient, as well as the normal overhead and operating expenses of the Institution, as required to support the Fellow's research.

Foundation Funding Priorities

You must have a research focus in one of the following disease areas:

- Brain Sciences: Psychiatry or Neurology (excluding Dementias, Motor Neuron Disease, Psychology and Cognitive Interventions, and COVID-19)
- Endocrinology (excluding Diabetes and COVID-19)
- Geriatrics (excluding Dementias and COVID-19)
- Lung Disease (other than Cancer and COVID-19)
- Rheumatology (excluding impact of COVID-19)
- Vision Sciences (excluding impact of COVID-19)
- Dermatology (excluding Skin Cancer and COVID-19)

The Foundation is particularly committed to funding discovery research that will increase understanding of the biological mechanisms causing diseases within the areas of support listed above. The Foundation will also consider funding translational research that is clearly based on an understanding of disease mechanisms and biology and has the potential to change clinical practice for treating a disease or its symptoms in its nominated areas of research interests. Clinical research is not a funding priority for the Foundation.

Discovery/Translational/Clinical Research are defined as follows:

1. **Discovery Research** - seeks to understand the biological processes that underpin health and disease at the molecular, cellular, organ system and whole-body levels. It may be conducted in vitro, in vivo and/or in silico.
2. **Translational Research** - process of using research findings to improve health and wellbeing. This process can include developing new treatments, creating evidence-based guidelines, and implementing new policies.
3. **Clinical Research** – cohort studies and clinical trials done in patients.

Application Rules

1. Applications open **3 August 2026** and close at **5pm AEST on 31 August 2026**.
2. Late applications will not be accepted. Difficulties using the [Online Application Portal](#) will not be accepted as a reason for late submission. If issues arise during the submission of an application, The Foundation must be notified of the issues by email. If possible, any problems will be corrected prior to the application deadline.
3. Applicants may apply for funding only once per calendar year, across any of the Foundation's schemes.

Non-Competitive Applications

To reduce the strain placed on the Foundation's review processes by non-competitive applications the following rule will apply where an Institution submits **three or more** applications.

Where more than 50% of applications submitted by the relevant Institution are deemed *non-competitive*¹:

1. The Institution's Research Office will be contacted to request that candidates for future funding rounds be more thoroughly screened.
2. On the second instance, the relevant Institution will receive an official warning.
3. On the third instance, the relevant Institution will be suspended from applying for Foundation funding for three years.

Eligibility Criteria

Qualifications

To apply you must be qualified as a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in a Medicine-related field of Science or a Doctor of Medicine (MD) with a postgraduate PhD equivalent. The Foundation will not accept qualifications including a MBBS, Masters degrees and MD as a research degree.

Seniority

1. You must be 10-15 years post-doctoral on 1 January of the application year unless Career Disruption applies (refer "Claims of Career Disruption").
This means that the date of the formal notice of award of your PhD/MD must fall within the date range 1 January 2011 and 31 December 2015 (inclusive). Please note that the date of degree conferral is not to be used.
2. You must hold a Level C appointment or above at a university that is a member of Universities Australia; or have been conferred as an equivalent honorary/adjunct appointment by a member university.

¹ Applications ranked in the bottom 75% of all applications are deemed non-competitive.

Employment and Location

You must be employed by a credentialed Australian Research Institution and carry out the research activities described in the application within Australia.

Eligible Institutions are limited to those that are NHMRC Approved Research Institutes (ARIs) and/or a member of AAMRI.

Institutions that are not NHMRC ARIs and/or AAMRI member organisations may apply to become a Rebecca L. Cooper Medical Research Foundation Approved Research Institution. To obtain such status, an institution must:

- Be a not-for-profit organisation;
- Operate within Australia (the Foundation does not allow funds to be transferred overseas);
- Prove that it carries out research that is submitted to stringent peer review;
- Have a formal Research and Ethics Committee overseeing all research related activities.

Please email grants@cooperfoundation.org.au for more information regarding application to become a Rebecca L. Cooper Medical Research Foundation Approved Research Institution.

Recipients of Other Awards

Rebecca Cooper Fellowship Recipients

You may not apply for the Rebecca Cooper Fellowship if you have previously been awarded a Rebecca Cooper Fellowship.

You may not hold another fellowship (federal or philanthropic funding that includes a salary) concurrently with your Rebecca Cooper Fellowship. You cannot apply for new fellowship funding until the final year of your Rebecca Cooper Fellowship.

Recipients of federal or philanthropic funding that includes a salary (including NHMRC Investigator Grant Recipients)

If you currently hold funding that includes a salary component - you may apply for a Rebecca Cooper Fellowship if your existing funding expires no later than 30 June 2027. Delayed commencement of the Rebecca Cooper Fellowship of up to six months is permitted in cases where funding overlaps.

If the outcome of an application with a salary component is pending - you may apply for a Rebecca Cooper Fellowship but if both applications are successful you must choose to relinquish one of the two awards.

For example, you cannot hold a Rebecca Cooper Fellowship and choose to relinquish the salary component of an NHMRC Investigator Grant. Applying for project-only funding from the NHMRC Investigator Grants scheme during the course of your Rebecca Cooper Fellowship is not permitted.

Grants with no Salary Component

It is acceptable to hold Grants with no Salary Component in conjunction with the Rebecca Cooper Fellowship.

Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Commitment

Unless stated otherwise in the application, successful applicants must commit to the fellowship on a full-time basis.

A full-time fellowship is intended to support a researcher (employed on a full-time basis) to conduct research. A full-time fellow must devote at least 80% of their FTE commitment to research aimed at achieving the objectives of the Rebecca Cooper Fellowship.

Career Disruptions are defined as prolonged interruptions to an applicant's capacity to work due to pregnancy, major illness/injury and/or carer responsibilities.

Career Disruptions must involve either a continuous absence from work for periods of more than 27 calendar days and/or continuous part-time employment (with defined % full-time equivalent, FTE) due to circumstances defined as a career disruption, with the absence amounting to a total of 27 calendar days or more.

Part-time work adjustments for Career Disruption

To ensure the research objectives of the Rebecca Cooper Fellowship progress at an acceptable rate, it is expected that fellows work a minimum of 0.8 FTE. Requests to work 0.6 FTE for a period of up to one year, may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Requests to adjust FTE commitment must be supported by evidence that the requested FTE is for circumstances defined as a Career Disruption. The non-research time is intended to be dedicated to serving the needs of the Career Disruption and cannot be spent on other paid employment, research, teaching or administrative roles, or clinical or practitioner responsibilities.

Where the Fellowship is taken up on a part-time basis, salary will be paid pro-rata, and the term of the fellowship will be extended to allow for the full award to be disbursed. For example, if you choose to work 0.8 FTE for the full term of the fellowship, the term of the fellowship will be extended by one year (total term six years).

Adjustments to FTE commitment must be formalised in a Deed of Variation prepared by the Foundation's solicitor at the cost of the Administrative Institution.

Leave of Absence for a Career Disruption

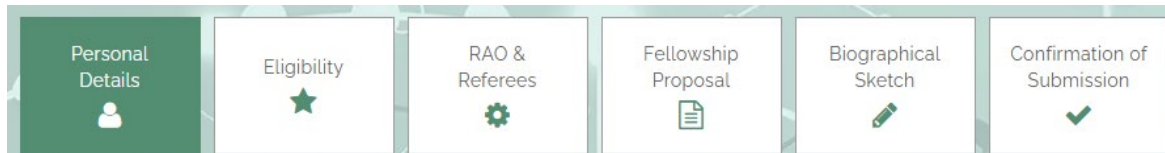
Where a period of leave exceeding 27 days is taken, fellows must notify the Foundation of the leave and provide supporting evidence that the requested leave is for circumstances defined as a Career Disruption.

Fellowship salary payments will be paused for the period of leave. The term of the fellowship will be extended commensurate with the period of leave and balanced with the need to ensure the research objectives of the Rebecca Cooper Fellowship progress at an acceptable rate in the case of prolonged absence or multiple absences. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

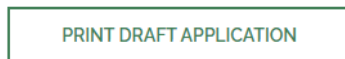
Adjustments to FTE commitment must be formalised in a Deed of Variation prepared by the Foundation's solicitor at the cost of the Administrative Institution.

How to Apply

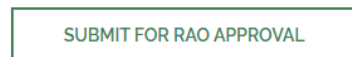
1. Create a user account for the [Online Application Portal](#), if you do not have an existing user account.
2. Log in to your account and select “Apply for Fellowship”.
3. Complete all five-sections of the application form by following the prompts. Should you wish to complete the form in multiple sittings, you may save your submission as a draft using the “Save Draft” button located at the bottom of each screen.



4. Seek feedback on your application from your RAO prior to submitting it for RAO approval. You may generate a draft copy of your application using the “Print Draft Application” button at the end of the form.



5. Submit your completed application form for RAO Approval using the “Submit for RAO Approval” button located at the end of the form. Please note that an application may not be amended once it is submitted for RAO approval.



6. Confirm that your application is listed in your *Submitted Applications* with the status “pending RAO approval”. If this item does not appear in your Submitted Applications list, this would indicate that the application was not successfully submitted for approval.

RAO Approval

The RAO listed on your application will receive an email requesting confirmation that the Administering Institution accepts terms of the grant as stipulated in the Application Guidelines as well as the Foundation’s general [Terms & Conditions](#).

If the RAO agrees, your application is finalised and you will receive an email confirming receipt of your application.

If the RAO does not agree, your application will be declined and you will be sent an email advising that your application has not been approved by the RAO.

If you do not receive either of these two emails, this would indicate that the RAO has not actioned the approval step.

Email communication will be sent from noreply@cooperfoundation.org.au. It is advisable to add this email address as a safe email address to ensure you receive communications from The Foundation.

Fellowship Proposal

Step four of the application form requires you to prepare a proposal in accordance with the requirements outlined below.

Proposal Content

Your proposal should include details of:

- your key achievements to date;
- where you see your future;
- how this award will contribute to your future career aspirations;
- details of your research including your vision for the next five years and the importance of the research you propose to conduct; and
- why your experience and qualifications make you particularly well-equipped to undertake the research you envisage.

Do not include links to a webpage, a reference list or appendices.

Proposal should be written in language that is understandable to an informed reader who may not have an in-depth knowledge of your area of research or research methodologies.

It is recommended that you draft your proposal in MS Word, and then copy and paste the content into the text editor included in the application form. To avoid any formatting issues, please ensure that content is pasted from MS Word, and not directly from a website.

Proposal Length (character limit)

The character limit for your grant proposal is as follows and will vary according to the size of the figure you choose to include:

- No figure – 8400 characters, including spaces.
- With small figure – 7400 characters, including spaces
- With medium figure – 7100 characters, including spaces
- With large figure – 6730 characters, including spaces

Inclusion of Figures

You may include a maximum of one figure in your proposal. The figure may contain tabulated information, images and diagrams and must be submitted as a jpg, jpeg, png or gif file. The figure size must comply with one of the three options below:

1. Small figure (230 x 331 pixels, width x height)
2. Medium figure (431 x 280 pixels, width x height)
3. Large figure (639 x 241 pixels, width x height)

Please refer to the Appendix A for a sample of each image size.

Information included as an image must be legible. The experience of The Foundation is that if the information in the figure is judged unreadable by the Scientific Advisory Committee (“SAC”), this will severely affect the likelihood of the proposal being judged competitive for funding. Please be aware that colour and definition may be lost if the image is printed.

Biographical Sketch

Step five of the application form requires you to provide:

- a list of your positions and honours held in the past five years, beginning with current;
- a list of your education and training beginning with baccalaureate or other initial professional education (include post-doctoral training and residency training if applicable);
- a brief bibliography summarising how many papers you have published and how many times they have been cited. Provide references (in AMA format) for your top five publications; and include the number of citings, the journal impact factor and the journal rank in field. Author lists may be abbreviated so long as it is clear which author you are (first, last or co-investigator). (max. 1200 characters, including spaces);
- details of current grant funding and research support; and
- details of your proposed mentor/mentorship arrangement (max. 300 characters, including spaces).

Referees

You are required to list two referees with your application. Referees may include mentors and may be located within or outside Australia. Should your application be shortlisted, referees will be emailed a questionnaire to complete which will provide them the opportunity to comment on your application and suitability for the award.

Mentor

Please list your career mentor, the person who mentors you with respect to your career.

Claims of Career Disruption

Should you wish to submit a Claim of Career Disruption, you must complete the relevant subsection in step two of the application form. You will be asked to provide:

1. A Statement of Impact briefly describing the impact of interruption(s) on your research output/productivity (max. 900 characters including spaces).
2. Details of each interruption:
 - a. Disruption Type (pregnancy, major illness/injury, carer's responsibilities).
 - b. Full Time Equivalent ("*FTE*") worked during the interruption period.

Workdays/week	FTE
0	0
1	0.2
2	0.4
3	0.6
4	0.8

- c. Commencement and end dates of the disruption period.
- d. Brief disruption details.

- e. Supporting evidence in PDF format. Only medical certificates and letters from your employer summarising the duration, % FTE and type of leave taken, will be accepted as evidence.

How is your Claim of Career Disruption Used?

- Your Statement of Impact will be shared with reviewers and considered in the review of your track record.
- Claims of Career Disruption will be used to determine eligibility of applicants who qualified in the period 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2010, who would otherwise not be eligible to apply. That is, the applicants who were awarded their PhD/MD between 15-18 years prior will be deemed eligible commensurate with the period of the Career Disruption claimed.

Eligible Disruptions

The Foundation uses the NHMRC's definition of Career Disruptions which are prolonged interruptions to an applicant's capacity to work due to pregnancy, major illness/injury and/or carer responsibilities.

Claimed interruptions must:

1. involve either a continuous absence from work for periods of more than 27 calendar days and/or or continuous part-time employment (with defined % full-time equivalent, FTE) due to circumstances defined as a career disruption, with the absence amounting to a total of 27 calendar days or more;
2. **not** exceed a total of three years; and
3. **not** be counted twice if there is overlap with another career disruption.

Claims for Career Disruption will be reviewed by the Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee and the Executive Officer of The Foundation. If these claims are judged invalid, the applicant will be informed and the application disqualified.

Fellowship Review and Award

Fellowship applications are reviewed by three members of the Fellowship Advisory Committee. Funding decisions are made by The Foundation's directors at a meeting to be held in December of the application year.

Applications are assessed with respect to the following three weighted criteria. Refer to Appendix B for the full Scoring Rubric.

1. **Future vision (45%)** – Does the applicant have a clear and feasible vision of their research and career direction?
2. **Personal Achievements / Track Record (35%)** – Has the applicant displayed the necessary knowledge, skills and attributes to implement the vision (including a history of raising funding, research output, research quality etc.)
3. **Research significance (20%)**

Application Outcomes

Successful applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application under embargo in December of the application year, in advance of the official announcement.

Under the embargo period, applicants can share outcomes with the research team and partner organisations (where applicable), however, they must not publicise the information until the embargo has been lifted. This includes posting comments regarding outcomes in public domains such as social forums, websites, journals or newspapers.

During the embargo period successful applicants may accept offers and proceed with planning. This includes seeking necessary approvals (for example, ethics approvals) and recruiting staff. Successful applicants may add grants to CVs for review (for example, as part of a new grant application) provided they add the words 'under embargo'. Research projects may commence if the embargo continues past the commencement date.

Feedback on applications will not be provided and The Foundation will not enter discussions concerning the outcome of individual applications.

Should you be successful in your application, you will be required to complete a Grant Acceptance Form that may be accessed via the [Online Application Portal](#).

Fellowship Administration

A deed will be entered into between The Foundation and the Administering Institution. That deed will set out the administrative requirements of the Fellowship including payment and reporting requirements.

General Terms and Conditions

Any breach of these Application Guidelines or the [Terms and Conditions](#) published on The Foundation's website will result in automatic disqualification for the award.

Applicants who accept the award are automatically included in The Foundation's reviewer pool and may be called upon to participate on future Scientific Advisory Committees; and

Contact

Enquiries regarding the application process may be sent to grants@cooperfoundation.org.au.

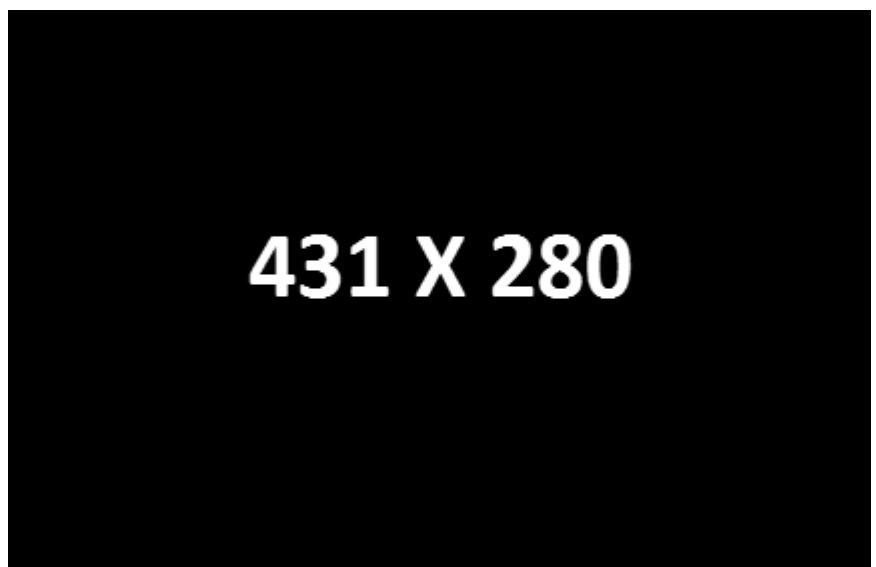
Appendix A

Image Size

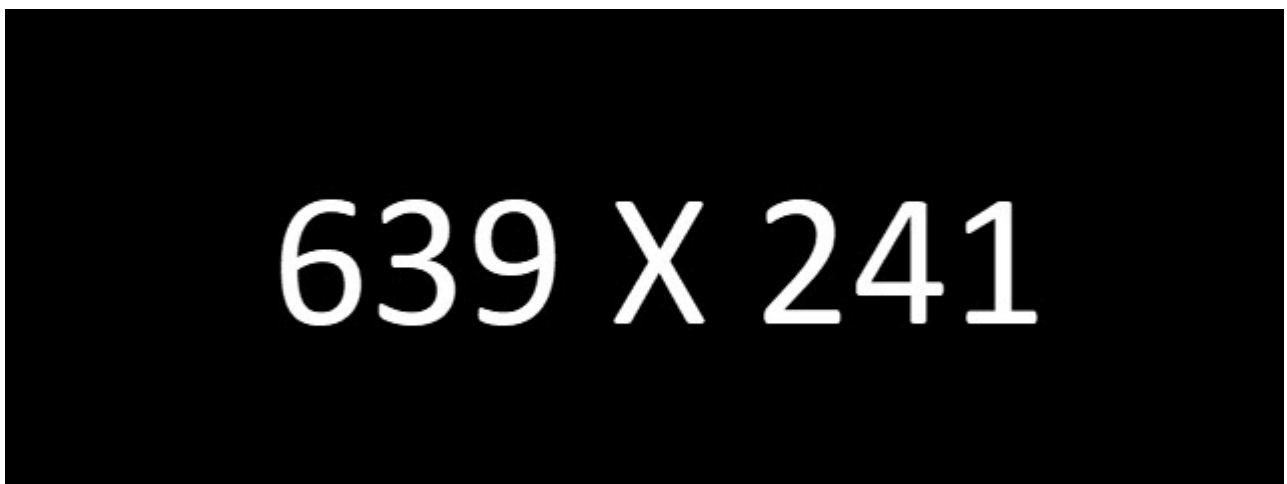
SMALL IMAGE



MEDIUM IMAGE



LARGE IMAGE



Appendix B

Rebecca Cooper Fellowship Scoring Rubric

Applications for the Rebecca Cooper Fellowship are scored on the following three dimensions using the Scoring Rubric below. The three scores will be summed to form a single score out of 100.

1. **Future vision (score out of 45)** – Does the applicant have a clear and feasible vision of their research and career direction?
2. **Personal Achievements / Track Record (score out of 35)** – Has the applicant displayed the necessary knowledge, skills and attributes to implement the vision (including a history of raising funding, research output, research quality etc.)?
3. **Research significance (score out of 20)**

Future Vision

41-45	Exceptional	Clear and concise articulation of all points below: 1. Articulates career progression goals 2. Vision for 5+ year program of research that is multidimensional (not just a description of a research project) 3. Evidence of innovation 4. Blue sky thinking; not miniature of methodology (not bogged down in complexity)
36-40	Outstanding	Clearly addresses all points below, though some in less detail: 1. Articulates career progression goals 2. Vision for 5+ year program of research that is multidimensional (not just a description of a research project) 3. Evidence of innovation 4. Big-picture thinking; not miniature of methodology (not bogged down in complexity)
31-35	Above expectations	Addresses most points below: 1. Articulates career progression goals 2. Vision for 5+ year program of research that is multidimensional (not just a description of a research project) 3. Evidence of innovation 4. Big-picture thinking; not miniature of methodology (not bogged down in complexity)
26-30	At expectations	Some detail on most points below: 1. Articulates career progression goals 2. Vision for 5+ year program of research that is multidimensional (not just a description of a research project) 3. Evidence of innovation

		4. Big-picture thinking; not miniature of methodology (not bogged down in complexity)
21-25	Below expectations	Vaguely articulates points below: 1. Articulates career progression goals 2. Vision for 5+ year program of research that is multidimensional (not just a description of a research project) 3. Evidence of innovation 4. Big-picture thinking; not miniature of methodology (not bogged down in complexity)
11-20	Poor	Very limited description of future goals.
1-10	Missing response/ misguided	No future vision articulated

Personal Achievements and Track Record

31-35	Exceptional	Applicant is achieving above their cohort. 1. Possesses exceptional/unique knowledge and skills to execute vision. 2. Has established strong mentors and collaborators. 3. Evidence of independence. Recognised as a strong leadership in their field, and on track to become a leader of Australian Medical Research. 4. Strong evidence of research feasibility. Demonstrates realistic project plan/timeline, access to required resources/facilities and preliminary findings/previous data to support proposal. 5. Significant evidence of successful competitive funding 6. Strong involvement in research community in roles such as editorial boards, ethics committees, review panels and professional bodies. 7. Has a strong record of mentoring and supervising students. 8. Exceptional research output; Publishes high-impact research in top-tier journals. Evidence of leadership positions (senior/corresponding author). 9. Evidence of excellent academic/professional recognition; Has received prestigious awards and/or invitations to present at conferences.
26-30	Outstanding	Applicant is near top of cohort. 1. Demonstrates strong depth of knowledge and skills required to execute vision. 2. Has established appropriate mentors and collaborations. 3. Evidence of independence. Recognised as strong leader in their field, emerging as a leader in Australian Medical Research. 4. Good research feasibility. Demonstrates consideration of the resources and timeline required and provides preliminary findings that support proposal.

		5. Strong evidence of competitive funding 6. Strong involvement in the research community in roles such as review committees, editorial boards, and professional bodies. 7. Strong record of mentoring and supervising students. 8. Excellent research output – Publishes high-impact research, some in top-tier journals. Evidence of leadership positions (senior/corresponding author). 9. Evidence of strong academic/professional recognition. Has received notable awards or invitations to speak at reputable conferences.
21-25	Above expectations	Strong record of achievement 1. Demonstrates appropriate knowledge and skills to execute vision. 2. Some mentorship and collaborations established. 3. Evidence of independence. A recognised as a leader in their field. 4. Evidence of feasibility of proposed research is present but could benefit from more refined planning or stronger preliminary data to support research pathway. 5. Good competitive funding. 6. Some involvement in the research community in roles such as review committees, editorial boards, and professional bodies. 7. Has solid experience mentoring and supervising students. 8. Good research output – Publishes in reputable journals. Author positions may vary, some evidence of leadership role. Overall output is solid and growing. 9. Evidence of recognition - Has received awards or invitations to speak at conferences, but may be more minor in scope.
16-20	At expectations	Good record of achievement 1. Demonstrates knowledge and skills in area of expertise. 2. Could benefit from further growth of mentorship and collaborations. 3. Has some leadership responsibilities and on track to independence 4. Evidence of feasibility could be improved with a more developed research plan or more preliminary data. 5. Some competitive funding 6. Some involvement in the research community in roles such as review committees, editorial boards, and professional bodies. 7. Some experience mentoring or supervising students. 8. Solid research output – Reputable publications, but may lack high-impact journals or prominent author positions. 9. Limited recognition - Limited awards or invitations to speak at conferences.
11-15	Below expectations	Team member still reliant support of group leader

		1. Insufficient knowledge, skills, mentorship or collaborations to lead research proposal. 2. Lacks evidence of leadership. Carrying out research of supervisor/group. 3. Questionable feasibility of proposed research plan and lacks preliminary findings to support research proposal. 4. Little competitive funding. 5. Little involvement in the research community in roles such as review committees, editorial boards, and professional bodies. 6. Poor research output – few publications, many in lower-impact journals. Author contribution is limited.
1-10	Poor/missing response	Has gaps in information provided which makes it impossible to determine feasibility of research or provides low confidence in the researcher's capability to achieve stated goals.

Research Significance

16-20	Exceptional	1. Likely to have a paradigm-shifting and ground-breaking impact with long-term implications for both knowledge and health outcomes. The research is poised to offer novel insights or innovative approaches that could redefine the field. 2. Identifies significant gaps in knowledge or unresolved questions and demonstrates a strong, innovative approach to filling these gaps. The proposal outlines how it will advance the field in meaningful, novel ways, showing clear potential for high-impact results.
11-15	Above expectations	1. Strong potential for significant advancement in knowledge, practices or health outcomes. While the findings may not radically alter the field, they will contribute substantial new knowledge or enhance current methods, practices, or technologies, with clear, actionable outcomes. 2. Identifies significant gaps in the field and provides a clear, though perhaps less detailed, explanation of how the research will address these gaps. The approach is reasonable and shows potential to advance understanding, though there may be room for further clarification or development of ideas.
5-10	At expectations	1. Contributes to existing knowledge or practice with moderate impact. The research provides valuable insights that enhance understanding or refine existing methods that may open avenues for further research. The potential for broad application is limited. 2. Identifies some gaps or limitations in the current knowledge but does so in a general or vague

		manner. The approach for addressing these gaps is not clearly addressed.
0-5	Below expectations / missing response	The research proposal lacks context.