

Research Grant Management Office

Rawalpindi Medical University

This paper proposes the establishment of a Research Grant Management Office (RGMO) at Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU).

It outlines the rationale, functions, structure and governance arrangements of the proposed 'RMU RGMO' and offers a roadmap and a timeline to establish the office.

Rationale

To date, many national and international research projects, funded by extramural grants have been successfully conducted at RMU. These projects have required varying degrees of Due Diligence and financial monitoring and reporting, which have hitherto been supported by RMU on an ad-hoc basis, separately across various departments.

Over the past several years, the Institute of Psychiatry has directly received international grant funding and provided research grant management and governance functions for several global health research projects relating to mental health. It has started to establish systems, policies and expertise that are broadly compliant with international funding requirements.

Now, with the award of a new NIHR UK Centre for IMPACT (in which RMU is a key partner), there is the **need** and the **opportunity** to institutionalise these functions at RMU, through setting up a **RMU Research Grant Management Office (RGMO)**.

Need: As the Centre funding is a large multinational grant, it will require a higher level of Due Diligence and scrutiny, generating additional work. Along with the growing portfolio of research grants held by RMU, this now requires an increase in grant management capacity, which can support all departments across the University.

Opportunity: The Centre for IMPACT grant aims to build capacity in both research and research support functions in Pakistan. The grant can be used initially to strengthen research grant governance and management functions at RMU, at least in the early years, whilst strategies for longer term sustainability are implemented.

Functions of the proposed RMU RGMO

1. To horizon scan for opportunities to apply for national and international research grants and share such opportunities with the RMU faculty members and postgraduate trainees.
2. To support clinical academics applying for extramural research grants, by preparing research budgets, providing evidence of meeting Due Diligence requirements (required at the application and award stage) and providing pre-submission sign-offs on behalf of the University.
3. To advise and support clinical academics in managing awarded extramural research grants in order to meet the requirements of the funding organisations. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. reviewing and arranging signing of contracts, collaboration agreements and MoUs
 - b. administering and maintaining research accounts

- c. establishing a rigorous and responsive mechanism for the financial flow, monitoring and auditing of research expenditure
- d. responding to requests from funding organisations in relation to Due Diligence and financial reporting.

NB: Although this may be an aspiration for the future, the RGMO will NOT be able to support clinical academics or students with the design or review of their study, or completion of research grant applications, other than the finance and governance sections. Such support would require considerable additional resources, which the RGMO would not have the capacity to support at this stage.

Proposed structure and governance arrangements of RGMO



The RGMO Director (part time) will have an in-depth understanding and experience of international research grant funding requirements and project management. The Finance Officer will be a finance expert responsible with substantial expertise in international grant and finance management

Separate research accounts for each project should be set up, or if this is not possible, each project should have its own grant code, which can readily identify income and expenditure related to that grant. The RGMO account(s) will use RMU's FTN for tax purposes.

For funding to flow to the project, requests would be generated by the project manager. The requests would be checked against the grant regulations and budget, and RMU policies, first by the RGMO Administrator, and the Finance Officer. If approved, requests would then be forwarded to the RGMO Director and the project PI for final approval and sign-off.

The Vice Chancellor will delegate sign-off to the RGMO Director, who will provide regular updates to the VC on a quarterly basis. Project funding flow should not be subject to lengthy delays that will compromise successful delivery of projects. To that end, processes should be in place to ensure funding draw-down requests are dealt with within 48 hrs, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

RGMO's finance functions will be separate from RMU's finance department as there are differing requirements for research finance management. This is a specialist area that will require a dedicated finance officer with the required expertise and experience in research grant management and audit.

For the purposes of any audit of RMU, the RGMO's finance officer will be responsible directly for liaising with the auditors and responding to any reporting requirements of the auditors.

Road map and timeline

The Administrator, Finance Officer and part-time RGMO Director roles can be supported through current NIHR UK and Medical Research Council UK grants held at IoP, and the new Centre grant, from September 2022, for the next 5 years, or until RMU grant income is able to sustain these functions through growth of research income, whichever is earlier.

The model to sustain RGMO functions longer-term will rely on including 5% of the total research costs applied for to support the Office. In addition, HEC performance grants, which are awarded to institutions on the basis of their ranking in the annual performance review can be used for this purpose.

Next steps and timetable

	July 22	Aug 22	Sept 22	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22
Draft RGMO proposal paper						
Review/approve RGMO proposal by RMU						
Appoint Director, Finance Officer & Administrator						
Set up RGMO bank account						
Identify current policy/systems gaps (using Centre Due Diligence checklist)						
Prepare essential policies and system requirements and gain approval by the Academic Council of RMU						
RGMO launch						

Benefits

A well-functioning research grant management office will help to enhance RMU's reputation as a research institution of international reputation, increase its ratings in the HEC performance table and allow RMU's clinical academics to attract more research grant income.

In addition to RMU-led research, national and international research teams will see RMU as an attractive partner for research grant applications. Income from successful grant applications will help sustain the running costs of the RGMO in future, making it cost-neutral to RMU, or even potentially generating funds for its expansion, depending on the rate of growth of RMU's research grant portfolio.

15th July 2022

Addendum

To add function of building research finance capacity at RMU and ORIC to role of RGMO

14th January 2023