



3RCC Funding Regulations – 3Rs Doctorate Programme

- **Approved by the Strategic Board 05.12.2024**
- **Revised by the Strategic Board 11.12.2025**

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1 Overview

1.1 Introduction

The 3Rs Doctorate Programme encourages a new generation of researchers to adopt a 3Rs Principle ethos where new methods are developed and transferred into practice. The programme provides researchers with the opportunity to obtain their PhD by conducting research with a specific 3Rs focus at the forefront of their research field of application. Funds are provided to complete the full duration of their doctoral training and projects are selected through the process of a call for proposals under specific remits.

1.2 Definitions

Funding Call	An official announcement to submit proposals for financial support. Calls will be of a specific nature depending on the strategic aim of the funding provided.
Grant Review Panel	A panel comprised of internationally recognized 3R experts who advise the 3RCC on research funding. They have an advisory function and no voting rights. The GRP is composed members of the 3RCC Scientific Advisory Board but may also include additional panel members selected for each specific round.
Node Coordinator	Members of the 3RCC Executive Board who are animal welfare officers and/or 3Rs experts at member universities (Nodes) and member organisations. They are in direct contact with students and researchers at the universities and are responsible for implementing the Centre's strategy at the node level.
Host Institution	A recognised nonprofit research institution based in Switzerland. The Host Institution is the place of research and the employer of both the PhD student and Project Supervisor. Recognized research institutions are the public Swiss universities, Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology, Swiss universities of applied sciences and university (associated) hospitals and non-commercial research centres outside the higher education sector.
Project Supervisor	The person involved in the day-to-day supervision and management of the PhD student.
Academic Institution	An accredited Swiss higher education institution providing PhD enrolment, where the PhD student is enrolled for the full duration of the Doctoral Programme and where the Academic Supervisor is employed. The Academic Institution and Host Institution can be the same Institution.
Academic Supervisor	The person accredited by the Academic Institution for oversight of a PhD Project. The Project Supervisor and Academic Supervisor can be the same person.

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1.3 Aim

- a. The 3RCC funds research grants for innovative 3Rs research projects of high scientific quality and 3Rs impact in Switzerland. Projects should:
 - i. Address existing gaps in 3Rs knowledge or methodology,
 - ii. Promote the development, optimisation and/or implementation of methods for the purpose of advancing the 3Rs and
 - iii. Aim to have a significant impact on the development of 3Rs research
- b. The Doctorate Programme aim to promote 3Rs ambassadors in the next generation of Swiss researchers.

1.4 Duration

- a. The maximum duration of funding is 48 months.

1.5 Maximum funding

- a. The maximum requested amount is CHF 70'000 per year (*i.e. CHF 280'000.- total per project*), capped at the total salary (*including social contributions*) of a PhD student at their chosen Host Institution.

1.6 Research proposals involving animals

- a. For research proposals that cannot achieve their research aims without the use of experimental animals, the applicant should:
 - i. Follow the Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Experiments on Animals from the SAS (Swiss Academy of Sciences) and the SAMS (Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences).
 - ii. Use best practice guidelines, such as pre-registration, PREPARE, or Animal Research: Reporting of *In Vivo* Experiments (ARRIVE).
- b. The formal ethical approval of animal experimentation licenses does not lie with the 3RCC's Grant Review Panel, but with the competent bodies of authority (e.g. the cantonal veterinary office).

1.7 Frequency

- a. Call frequency is determined within the four-year strategic plan and can be adjusted depending on funds available.

1.8 Project results

- a. Intellectual property
 - i. Knowledge and skills acquired during the Project remain with the Grant Recipient and Home Institution.
 - ii. No intellectual property rights are transferred to the 3RCC through the Knowledge Transfer Grant.
 - iii. It is the responsibility of the Home Institution and the Grant Recipient to agree on the allocation of intellectual property created using knowledge acquired at the Home Institution

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- b. Financial benefits
 - i. The Project results must not create any direct financial benefits during the Project for any involved parties.
- c. Rights to Project results
 - i. The rights to results gained during research work funded by the 3RCC are owned by the Grant Recipient and/or the Host Institution in accordance with the policy of the Host Institution.

2 Eligibility

2.1 Requirements for the research proposal

- a. Requirements for grant applications are defined in the remits of the individual Funding Calls.

2.2 Lead Applicant – 3Rs Doctorate Programme

- a. Applicants must be natural persons:
 - i. With academic qualifications and any other requirements (e.g. language, residency) providing eligibility to conduct a PhD at an Academic Institution.
 - ii. That have or will have completed their undergraduate education before the start of the proposed project.
 - iii. Students from any discipline are eligible to apply, however particular consideration will be given to students with a background in biology, medicine, engineering, statistics, law or ethics.
- b. Applicants selected for funding must:
 - i. Enrol in an accredited Doctoral programme at an Academic Institution throughout the time of the Project.
 - ii. Be employed as doctoral students by the Host Institution.
 - iii. Comply with any other eligibility and enrolment requirements of both the Host and Academic Institution.

2.3 Eligible Costs – 3Rs Doctorate Programme

- a. Eligible costs are the salary (plus social contributions) of the awarded PhD candidate, compliant with the salary range and other guidelines of the Host Institution.

2.4 Contribution of the Host Institution

- a. The following costs are expected to be contributed by the Host Institution:
 - i. Infrastructure
 - ii. Overhead costs related to the Project
 - iii. Expenses or services outside of Switzerland
 - iv. Administration of Funds
 - v. Equipment costs

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- vi. Costs of project-related services by third parties in the domain of research
 - vii. Costs of the use of project-related equipment
 - viii. Consumables directly used in the scope of the Project
 - ix. Animal costs
 - x. Expenses related to travel, meetings and communication of the results
 - xi. Publications in compliance with an open-access policy of open access.
- b. The Project Supervisor is required to be a collaborator on the Grant. Where the Academic and Host Institution differ, the Academic Supervisor is also required to be a collaborator on the Grant.

2.5 Joint Applications – 3Rs Doctorate Programme

- a. Multiple lead applicants are not applicable. Other researchers involved in the Project should be listed as collaborators.

2.6 Project Supervision

- a. By the submission of the Full Application, the applicant must have found a Project Supervisor, a Host Institution and an Academic Institution (where applicable) to support the Project and PhD thesis.
- b. The Project Supervisor and Academic Supervisor (where applicable) should be listed as a Project collaborator and confirm their involvement independently within the Grant Portal.
 - i. At the Full Application stage, the 3RCC can provide support in identifying potential Project Supervisors and/or Host Institution, however the 3RCC cannot guarantee this is successful.

2.7 Collaboration with commercial research organisations

- a. Research conducted for directly commercial purposes will not be funded.
- b. For-profit/private/industrial partners are allowed as collaborators on the PhD Project along with an eligible applicant, Host Institution and Academic Institution (where applicable), as described in these Regulations.
- c. Applicants who wish to conduct the planned research in collaboration with a commercially oriented institution must be able to prove to the 3RCC that the principles of research freedom, research independence and freedom to publish will be upheld.
- d. Sponsors and owners of commercial research organisations outside the higher education sector may not derive any direct financial benefit from their involvement in the funded research work.
- e. The quality of research at non-commercial research institutions outside the higher education sector, or in collaboration with commercially oriented institutions, must be at the same level as, or higher than, research conducted at research facilities at the Academic Institution.



3 Application

3.1 Language

- a. The language for all correspondence with the 3RCC is English.

3.2 Process – 3Rs Doctorate Programme

- a. A grant application to the 3RCC is a four-step process:
 - i. Applicants will initially complete an outline application and motivation letter.
 - ii. If successful, applicants may be invited to interview.
 - iii. Selected candidates nominate an Academic supervisor and Host Institution.
 - iv. Applicants will be invited to submit a full application jointly with their Project supervisor.
- b. The 3Rs Node Coordinator – 3RCC’s representative at the Higher Education Institution – can support applicants in this process. A candidate applying with any other institution should contact the 3RCC Directorate for support.

3.3 Document submission

- a. All application documents are submitted via the 3RCC Funding Portal.

3.4 Conflict of Interest

- a. The 3RCC expects all applicants to comply with good practice aimed at preventing conflicts of interests in scientific research, for example where the people involved (researchers, collaborators, or stakeholders) have relationships or interests that could affect the integrity of the research or could stand to financially profit from the research.

3.5 Contributions by the Host Institution

- a. A signed “Letter of Support” from the Host Institution is required when submitting the Full Application to ensure that the Project will have institutional support and be provided for in accordance with clause 2.5 of these regulations.

3.6 Resubmission

- a. Resubmissions of applications are permitted provided that significant modifications have been made compared to the previous application which reflect the changing external conditions and/or improvements to the application in line with provided feedback from the original reviews. The applicant must acknowledge that the application is a resubmission and describe the changes made from the previous submission in an attached cover letter at the Outline Application stage.

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4 Assessment

4.1 Criteria for award and evaluation

- a. Grant applications are evaluated based on:
 - i. **Scientific Quality**
 - Innovation and new perspectives for the 3Rs in the proposed approach.
 - Whether it adds significant value to current scientific understanding.
 - Interdisciplinary Relevance, applicability and value.
 - ii. **Impact on the 3Rs (Replace, Reduce, Refine)**
 - Clear integration of, and motivation to further the 3Rs Principle.
 - Demonstration of measurable replacement or reduction of animal use, and/or animal welfare improvements.
 - Potential for adoption and broader application by other labs or research groups.
 - iii. **Feasibility**
 - Flexibility and risk management of the Project to ensure a successful completion of the PhD training.
 - Collaborations and partnerships necessary to Project success.
 - iv. **Other criteria**
 - Clear plan for communicating the research outcomes to non-specialist audiences and stakeholders.
 - Commitment to sharing data and results transparently with Open Access
 - Structured plan for PhD Candidate's training and long-term professional growth.
- b. Additional criteria may apply as specified in Funding Calls.

4.2 Review process – outline applications

- a. Outline applications are assessed for validity by the 3RCC.
- b. The application is assessed by at least two members of the Grant Review Panel based on the specific remits of the Funding Call.
- c. The entire Grant Review Panel convenes and rank all outline applications based on the criteria.
- d. Selected applicants are invited to complete a full application. The number of outline applications that are invited to the next stage is dependent on the quality of the applications, as well as the probability of success.

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4.3 Review process – full funding applications

- a. Full funding applications are checked for validity and completeness by the 3RCC.
- b. The proposal is independently reviewed by a minimum of two external, international experts.
- c. The research proposal is individually assessed by three members of the Grant Review Panel, taking into consideration the external reviews.
- d. The individual assessment of the Grant Review Panel forms the preliminary ranking of the proposals.
- e. The final ranking of all research proposals is set in the Grant Review Panel meeting. The highest-ranking research proposals that can be accommodated within the budget for the Funding Call are recommended for funding to the Strategic Board of the 3RCC. Any special conditions of funding are described in the recommendations.
- f. The 3RCC's Strategic Board approves which proposals will be funded.

4.4 Availability of reviews

- a. For both the Outline and Full Application processes, all applicants are provided with the written reviews from both external experts and members of the Grant Panel. The Review Summary document is complete except for the name of the reviewer, the overall score from 1-5 and any confidential information.

4.5 Right of appeal

- a. Applicants have no right to any formal appeal process regarding the decision of the Strategic Board. Feedback received will be taken into consideration for further calls.

5 Legal Framework

5.1 Governing law

- a. These Regulations are governed by the substantive laws of Switzerland.
- b. The exclusive place of jurisdiction is Bern, Switzerland.

5.2 Relationship to other documents

- a. In case of conflicts between documents, the following order of precedence applies:
 - i. The individual Grant Agreement
 - ii. The Appendices to the individual Grant Agreement
 - iii. The Implementation Regulations for Project Grants (*pending url*)
 - iv. The Funding Regulations for Project Grants (*pending url*)

- v. The specific terms of the funding call.

5.3 Language

- a. The authoritative language for all regulations and agreements is English.
- b. In case of discrepancies between language versions, the English version prevails.

5.4 Amendments

- a. The 3RCC may amend these Funding Regulations at any time.
- b. Amendments apply to:
 - i. All new grants awarded after the effective date of the amendment
 - ii. Existing grants, where the changes do not materially disadvantage the Grant Recipient or the Host Institution.
- c. The Grant Recipient and Host Institution will be notified of any amendments affecting existing grants.

5.5 Severability

- a. If any provision of these regulations is found to be invalid or unenforceable, the remaining provisions remain in full force and effect.
- b. Invalid provisions will be replaced with valid provisions that most closely achieve the intended purpose.

5.6 Data protection

- a. Personal data collected in connection with these Grants is processed in accordance with Swiss data protection laws.
- b. Data is used solely for purposes of grant administration and evaluation.
- c. The Grant Recipient has the right to access and correct their personal data held by the 3RCC.

5.7 Effective date

- a. These Funding Regulations enter into force on the 12th of December 2025.
- b. They apply to all Project Grants awarded on or after the effective date.
- c. Grants awarded before the effective date remain governed by the regulations in force at the time of award, unless otherwise specified.