



# **Guidance notes for research applicants**



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# Introduction

ICAS is committed to supporting and encouraging high quality policy relevant research, which is in the public interest, will contribute to the ICAS policy themes and positions, and will have an impact on the accountancy profession or business in an international or UK context.

Two types of research funding applications may be submitted:

- Applications for funding under a specific call for research issued by ICAS, which will require applications to be submitted by a specific date; and
- Pro-active applications for research funding, where they are in the public interest and are consistent with the Policy Leadership Board's (PLB) policy themes and the policy positions of one of the ICAS expert panels. Such applications are accepted at any point in time.

This document provides guidance on the application and review process for both types of application; it then covers issues relating to eligible grant costs, project management, outputs and the publication process.

The ICAS Research Centre funds, administers and monitors the research projects, and ensures the quality of the resulting publications and provides a number of additional in-kind benefits to our researchers.

These guidelines ensure that the ICAS reputation is enhanced by accepting only the best quality projects.

# Applying under an ICAS call for research

Applications for funding are welcome from researchers and institutions anywhere in the world and are not restricted to the academic community.

Each call for research will specify the application requirements, including the deadline by which applications must be received. Generic guidance on the information to be included in an application is included in the next section of this guidance.

Applicants will generally be asked to submit a short application form, research proposal and summary CVs. The proposals will be considered by a panel of academics and non-academics in order to reach a short list of preferred bidders. Preferred bidders may be invited to a meeting with a panel of experts to discuss their proposals before a final funding decision is made.

The application form is available at [icas.com](http://icas.com) (search for research funding), or by contacting the Research Centre.

Applicants should also refer to our standard funding contract, available at [icas.com](http://icas.com) for our standard terms and conditions prior to formally applying for funding. Any queries should be directed to the Research Centre.

The following sections provide further guidance on the application and review process under a call for research.

## Application process

Applicants should complete the grant application form, prepare a detailed research proposal and submit a summarised CV for each applicant. The application form should act as a cover sheet for the proposal. The application must be submitted by the deadline outlined in the specific call for research.

Research proposals should include the following:

- introduction;
- an explanation as to why the research team are suitable individuals to undertake the project;

- aims, objectives and proposed research questions – referring to the call for research as appropriate;
- methodology;
- brief review of prior research (academic and other);
- an explanation of how the research will meet the evidence needs and objectives as outlined in the call for research:
- an explanation of the anticipated impact and influence of the project, and how this will be achieved, including any suggestions for dissemination of the research results;
- expected outputs;
- if ICAS assistance is required in terms of access to our technical staff or any other non-financial assistance, details should be provided;
- a realistic timetable, incorporating key milestones (for example: literature review completed; research instrument submitted to ICAS for approval; data collection completed; research results analysed; and draft report submitted to ICAS);
- funding required (for details of eligible costs please see page 8 of this guidance); and
- references.

Applicants should refer to the specific call for research for any additional requirements.

The review process for applications under calls for research is covered in the next section.

# Review process

## Overview by Research Centre

Applications are initially reviewed by the ICAS Research Centre. This review concentrates on the following points:

- the completeness of the application;
- whether the application covers the requirements of the call for research;
- whether the project proposal satisfactorily identifies the key issues to be investigated;
- whether the project is likely to achieve the anticipated impact and influence;
- whether the costing and timetable is realistic and appropriate; and
- whether the applicant(s) have a track record of producing policy relevant research. In addition, if the applicant(s) have previously produced research projects for ICAS, whether their research has been produced timeously. Researchers who have failed to produce research reports on time in the past will not normally be considered for future ICAS funding, other than in exceptional circumstances.

Applications received after the deadline for submission outlined in the call for research will not be considered.

All the applications received under a call for research will be reviewed together in order that a short list of preferred bidders can be produced. The Research Centre may seek further clarification or more details at this point. The applications not shortlisted will receive notification that they have been rejected at this stage.

## Review of shortlisted applications

A panel of reviewers will be established for each call for research. The panel will ordinarily be made up of:

- the Chair of the ICAS Research Panel;
- the ICAS Head of Research
- plus either:
  - a steering group established by the Research Centre to oversee the particular project; or
  - selected members of the ICAS Research Panel and the relevant ICAS expert panel; or
  - two independent reviewers (one academic and one practitioner) selected by the Research Centre.

The panel of reviewers will be asked to consider and rank the shortlisted applications. The ranking of applications will be based upon:

- the strength and completeness of the proposal;
- whether the proposal satisfactorily identifies the key issues to be investigated and covers the matters outlined in the call for research;
- whether the project is likely to achieve the anticipated impact and influence;
- whether the research method is suitable for this project;
- whether the researchers have sufficient experience and a track record of research in this area and if this is demonstrated by their review of the existing literature and identification of the key issues to be investigated; and
- whether the proposed research appears achievable within the timetable and represents value for money.

## Final funding decision

Selected bidders may be invited to attend a meeting with the panel to discuss their proposals.

The final funding decision will be made by the panel of reviewers. When there is a disagreement amongst the panel members the final decision will be made by the Research Panel Chair. The successful applicant will be

notified and a research contract will be issued. All unsuccessful applicants will be notified by email of the decision.

If no suitable applications are received, the Research Centre may decide to re-advertise the call for research or decide not to proceed with the project.

Where the applicant is a member of the ICAS Research Panel, additional procedures are undertaken to ensure that the review process is independent of the panel member.

## Pro-active applications for research

There is no upper or lower limits for grant applications under this pro-active route. Applications for funding are welcome from researchers and institutions anywhere in the world and are not restricted to the academic community. Applications may be submitted throughout the year and there are no specific deadlines.

Applications for research funding are considered where they are in the public interest and are consistent with the PLB's policy themes and the policy positions of one of the ICAS expert panels. These policy themes and positions are available at [icas.com](http://icas.com) - search for research funding.

Applicants should, in the first instance, complete our short informal proposal form, specifying how the proposed project will contribute to the ICAS policy themes and policy positions and its relevance to one of our expert panels. Selected applicants will then be asked to proceed to the formal application stage.

The informal proposal form and formal application form are available at [icas.com](http://icas.com) (search for research funding) or by contacting the Research Centre.

Applicants should also refer to our standard funding contract, available at [icas.com](http://icas.com) for our standard terms and conditions prior to formally applying for funding. Any queries should be directed to the Research Centre.

The following sections provide further guidance on the application and review process for pro-active applications.

### Application process

As per above, applicants should, in the first instance, complete our short pro-active grant informal proposal form, specifying how the proposed project will contribute to the ICAS policy themes and policy positions and its relevance to one of our expert panels.

The informal proposal form will initially be considered by the Head of Research and the Secretary to the appropriate expert panel. The proposal may be rejected at this stage or further clarification sought from the applicant(s).

The Head of Research may then seek the views of the members of the Research Panel and relevant expert panel on the informal proposal form. The Research Centre will provide informal and constructive feedback on the project, prior to asking selected applicants to proceed to the formal application stage.

Applicants asked to proceed to this next stage should complete the formal proactive grant application form, prepare a detailed research proposal and submit a summarised CV for each applicant.

Research proposals should include the following:

- introduction;
- an explanation as to why the research team are suitable individuals to undertake the project;
- aims, objectives and proposed research questions;
- methodology;
- brief review of prior research (academic and other);
- contribution to knowledge, including:
  - how the proposed project will contribute to the ICAS policy themes and policy positions and its relevance to at least one of the ICAS expert panels;

- why the research is in the public interest and the public benefit expected to be delivered;
  - which professional, business and academic communities would be interested in this study;
  - how the proposed research and its findings would be likely to influence or affect current best practice and contribute to the policy-making debate;
  - the extent to which the research will be breaking new ground or building upon work which has already been undertaken; and
  - a summary of the key issues which you believe are likely to arise from the project.
- an explanation of the anticipated impact and influence of the project, and how this will be achieved, including any suggestions for dissemination of the research results;
  - expected outputs;
  - if ICAS assistance is required in terms of access to our technical staff or any other non-financial assistance, details should be provided;
  - a realistic timetable, incorporating key milestones (for example: literature review completed; research instrument submitted to ICAS for approval; data collection completed; research results analysed; and draft report submitted to ICAS)
  - the funding required (for details of eligible costs please see page 8 of this guidance); and
  - references.
- the completeness of the application;
  - whether the project will contribute to the ICAS policy themes and policy positions, and be of use to one of our expert panels;
  - whether the project proposal satisfactorily identifies the key issues to be investigated;
  - whether there are any policy implications that may result from this work;
  - whether the project is likely to achieve the anticipated impact and influence;
  - whether the project is in the public interest and of relevance to ICAS members;
  - whether the costing and timetable is realistic and appropriate; and
  - whether the applicant(s) have a track record of producing policy relevant research. If the applicant(s) have previously produced research projects for ICAS, whether their research has been produced timeously. Researchers who have failed to produce research reports on time in the past will not normally be considered for future ICAS funding, other than in exceptional circumstances.

The application may then be sent back to the applicant(s) asking for further clarification or more details. Some projects are rejected outright at this stage.

Once the ICAS Research Centre is satisfied that the above criteria have been met, the formal application will normally be referred to a member of the ICAS Research Panel, two independent reviewers (one academic and one practitioner) and relevant expert panel(s) for consideration.

### Review of formal application

The reviewers will be asked if they support funding of the application, and for their views on:

The review process for pro-active applications is covered in the next section.

## Review process

### Overview by Research Centre

Applications are initially reviewed by the ICAS Research Centre. This would normally be undertaken by the Head of Research, in consultation with the Secretary to the relevant expert panel. This review concentrates on the following points:

- whether the proposal satisfactorily identifies the key issues to be investigated;
- whether the proposed research is in the public interest, of interest to the profession and relevant to developing public policy in the area;
- whether the project is likely to achieve the anticipated impact and influence the profession or business in an international or UK context;
- whether the proposed research addresses a gap in current knowledge/ existing literature;
- whether the research method is suitable for this project;
- whether the proposed research appears achievable within the timetable, represents value for money and will have relevance at the completion date; and
- whether the researchers have sufficient experience and a track record of research in this area and if this is demonstrated by their review of the existing literature and identification of the key issues to be investigated.

### Final funding decision

A final funding decision will be made by the Chair of the Research Panel. The decision may be referred to the full Research Panel and the PLB as considered appropriate.

Applicants may be invited to attend a meeting to discuss their proposal.

## Guidance notes on eligible costs

Each call for research will detail the maximum grant available for a particular project. There is no upper or lower limit for pro-active grant applications, however, each application will be assessed individually to consider if it reflects value for money.

Research grants can cover all direct expenditure attributable to a project, including teaching buy-out. Indirect overhead costs for research projects will not be met.

### Eligible direct expenditure

Grant applications may include the following eligible costs:

- research assistant costs
- teaching buy-out (see additional guidance below)
- travel and subsistence
- secretarial services
- printing, postage and other consumables
- specialist software or data costs.

The above list is not exhaustive - for further advice please contact the Research Centre. Costs included in research applications are assessed on an individual basis.

### Conference costs

Conference attendance costs should not be included in grant applications.

### Academic teaching buy-out policy

ICAS recognises the importance of funding teaching buy-out where a research project is urgent or time sensitive or a project is hindered by a heavy teaching load, and will be pleased to consider applications for grants, including teaching buy-out, on a case by case basis. Applicants may only claim the actual cost of buying-in teaching replacement, excluding any overhead element.

Applicants who would like to apply for teaching buy-out costs should include in their application the reason why teaching buy-out funding is being sought and detail how the amount has been calculated.



## Consultancy fees

Grant funding may be paid by way of a consultancy fee to an individual, an entity or an organisation.

## VAT

The maximum grant funding outlined in the call for research should include any VAT, if applicable.

**For further advice on eligible costs please contact the Research Centre.**

## The final stages

### Project management

Good project management is required from researchers and ICAS attaches great importance on the adherence to agreed schedules. The following procedures will be adopted to encourage the timely delivery of all research projects:

- Key project stages must be identified in the proposal and ongoing project performance will be measured against these milestones.
- Short quarterly or monthly email progress reports are required.
- The Research Centre will monitor project milestones very robustly and assiduously to ensure that projects are delivered to timetable. Research contracts may be terminated if research projects are not delivered timeously.
- Researchers may be requested to submit chapters of their draft research reports as they are written, or such other similar basis as is agreed, to facilitate ICAS management of a project.
- Researchers will normally be invited to attend the ICAS Research Panel or other ICAS expert panel meetings or steering group meetings in order to

provide an update on progress of their project, initial findings and conclusions.

- Researchers who fail to produce research projects within the agreed timetable or a reasonable period thereafter, will not normally be considered for future funding, other than in exceptional circumstances.
- It is recognised that payments for projects are usually phased over time as expenditure is incurred based on invoices and/or certified expenditure. Payments are subject to satisfactory and regular progress reports and submission of draft research instruments.

### Outputs

The minimum output from each research project will be specified in each call for research or agreed in advance for a pro-active grant application, but would generally include:

- A fully refereed research report published and widely distributed within academia, the profession, the business community and policy makers.
- A discussion event to launch the report, encourage debate and ensure that the research findings reach practitioners, regulators and policy makers.
- A press release and an article for publication and distribution by ICAS in order to maximise publicity for the report at the time of publication.
- The research will be used by ICAS to develop policy positions and, on occasion, also feed into larger ICAS thought leadership projects.

The Research Centre is happy to discuss alternative forms of output from research projects on a case by case basis.

Researchers are encouraged to publish their results in academic journals and professional magazines; although priority should be given to the ICAS research report which should be submitted to ICAS prior to any other research

output being submitted to journals/magazines. Unless agreed in advance, the ICAS report should be published before any other output to allow ICAS the opportunity to maximise the publicity for the work.

## Publication process

Draft reports should be submitted in accordance with the agreed timetable and in accordance with the ICAS *Guidance notes for authors*.

On receipt of the report, the Head of Research reads the draft. Although the report is expected to be free from grammatical and spelling errors and to be written in correct English, the report may be edited by the Head of Research for grammar and punctuation, as well as to make it more readable to a business audience. If the draft report is of appropriate quality and covers the project remit, it is then sent to the original reviewers or steering group members. In circumstances where the report is not of appropriate quality and does not appear to meet the project remit or the requirements of the *Guidance notes for authors*, it will be returned to the authors with comments. A revised draft report will then need to be submitted.

Once comments are received from reviewers/steering group members these are sent, together with any comments from the Head of Research, to the researcher(s) for the report to be revised.

Depending upon the extent of the revisions required, the revised report may go back to the reviewers/steering group, or the Head of Research may decide that publication is now acceptable without the further involvement of the reviewers.

The report is typeset and sent to the researcher(s) and the Research Panel for approval to publish. The Head of Research will liaise with the researchers regarding any final points arising from this approval process. Publication is always dependent upon reviewer and ICAS Research Panel members' comments.

**Research reports are produced digitally only and are available to download free of charge from the ICAS website. Copyright of the published report will rest with ICAS**



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