



Osteopathy Australia research funding policy

1. Purpose and scope

Osteopathy Australia (OA) is committed to supporting high-quality research that advances the evidence base for osteopathy, enhances patient care, and benefits the Australian community.

This policy outlines Osteopathy Australia's expectations for research that is funded, supported, or endorsed by OA. It applies to:

- all awardees of Osteopathy Australia research grants and scholarships,
- external organisations or individuals engaged in research on behalf of Osteopathy Australia, and
- Osteopathy Australia staff and committee members involved in research oversight.

2. Eligibility

- An individual may be listed as the Lead Investigator on only one proposal per application cycle and must not currently hold an Osteopathy Australia Research Grant. If the Lead investigator is an osteopath, they must be a current financial member of Osteopathy Australia.
- All researchers involved in the project must be named in the application.
- Each application must include at least one, osteopath who is a current financial member of Osteopathy Australia as part of the investigator team. Preference will be given to applications with multiple osteopaths in meaningful roles.
- The majority of osteopaths listed in any application must be current financial members of Osteopathy Australia.
- Projects with limited osteopathic representation must provide a clear justification of:
 - o The appropriateness of the team composition, and
 - o The value and impact for the osteopathy profession, and
 - o How they will collaborate and engage with the osteopathy profession

- All researcher levels including PhD students are encouraged to apply, although PhD students cannot be listed as the lead investigator.
- The administering institution or organisation must be Australian based, registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), hold the required Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status, be eligible to receive grants from OARF, and be named in the final funding agreement.
- Where eligibility is unclear, the Osteopathy Australia Research Committee may request additional information to assess compliance.

3. Governance and oversight

- Research funding is allocated to support independent projects that align with Osteopathy Australia's research priorities and strategic objectives. Grants are awarded through a competitive process, with applications undergoing a rigorous, blinded review and being assessed and ranked by independent external academic reviewers to minimise bias and manage potential conflicts of interest. Only then are funding decisions made by the Research Committee.
- Recommendations are then ratified by the Board and are based on merit.
- To comply with integrity requirements and the charitable status of the Osteopathy Australia Research Fund (OARF), all research grants must be administered through an approved institution and cannot be paid directly to individual researchers.
- Osteopathy Australia (OARF) reserves the right not to fund any projects in a given research grants cycle.
- Generally, applications submitted after the published deadline will be excluded.
- Osteopathy Australia reserves the right not to fund any projects within a given research grant cycle if the applications do not meet the required standard for funding.
- This policy is reviewed every two (2) years or earlier if required by the OA Board.

4. Application process and assessment

- Applications must be submitted via email to the Research and Grants Officer by published deadlines.
- Each application is assessed by two independent reviewers with relevant topic/method expertise.

- If there is a large discrepancy between the scores the two reviewers give a single application, then a third reviewer is sought.
- Only applications scoring above 75 will progress to the next stage of review.
- Scoring follows a predetermined criterion and rubric, including:
 - o Alignment with OA Research Priorities
 - o Innovation and significance
 - o Methodology and feasibility
 - o Investigator experience and capability
 - o Budget justification and cost-effectiveness
- Scores inform the Research Committee's recommendations; the OA Board makes the final decision.
- Committee members who apply for funding must declare a conflict of interest and recuse themselves from all assessment, scoring, and decision-making processes.

5. Research integrity and ethics

- All research must comply with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (NHMRC)

Researchers are expected to uphold the highest standards of:

- Data accuracy and reproducibility
- Responsible authorship and peer review
- Transparency in research methods and findings
- Conflict of interest disclosure

Where research involves human participants, ethics approval must be obtained prior to the release of OA funding.

6. Funding and grant payments

- The Osteopathy Australia Research Fund is a charitable trust operating as a Public Ancillary Fund (PuAF). Under Australian law, PuAFs cannot provide payments or benefits directly to individuals. Funds may only be distributed to eligible organisations, such as universities or research institutes, endorsed as Deductible Gift Awardees (DGRs). To comply with integrity requirements, research grants must

be administered through an approved institution and cannot be paid directly to individual researchers.

- The Osteopathy Australia Research Committee annually reviews and recommends indicative budget amounts. Funding for each OA Research Grant is determined by the assessed budget, and applicants must justify how it supports the proposed research outcomes. Only direct research costs are eligible, with up to 20% of funds allocated for dissemination (e.g., open-access publication). Institutional overheads are not funded.
- Submission of an application does not create a legal or binding commitment. Any such commitment will be formalised through a Funding Agreement, which may include additional conditions.
- Agreements must be finalised within 4 months of grant notification, and 30 days before the end of the financial year; failure to do so may result in forfeiture. Grants will not be paid until the Agreement is executed by both parties.
 - Project grants are disbursed in two instalments:
 - 50% on execution of the Funding Agreement
 - 50% on submission of the interim report
 - Full disbursement is contingent upon compliance with all grant conditions. Significant changes ($\geq 50\%$ of budget or timeline) must be approved prior to the interim report. Funds are released within 45 days of finalisation of the agreement or ethics approval, whichever occurs later.

7. Amendments to the project

Amendments to project design, investigators, or budget must be emailed to the Research and Grants Officer and approved by the Chair of the Research Committee (or delegate). Amendments will only be considered for approval following receipt and review of a satisfactory interim report. Projects not completed as approved may require full reimbursement. If a project does not commence, remaining funds will not be released, and previously disbursed funds may be reclaimed in part or in full.

8. Conflict of interest (COI)

- All applicants must declare any real, potential, or perceived COIs at the time of application and throughout the life of the project.
- Members of OA committees and review panels must also declare COIs and, where necessary, recuse themselves from decision-making.
- All COIs will be recorded and managed according to OA's governance protocols.

9. Commercial interests

Research projects can include collaboration with commercial or industry partners, provided such involvement does not compromise the independence, integrity, or purpose of the research. Funding may be awarded to projects that involve a commercial partner where:

- The research design, conduct, analysis, and reporting remain fully independent of commercial influence.
- All commercial relationships, interests, and contributions are fully disclosed.
- Data ownership, access, and publication rights remain unrestricted and transparent.
- Grant funding is not used to cover the costs of commercial partners' products, subscriptions, fees, or other charges.

This policy ensures that OA-funded research maintains independence, integrity, and transparency, and serves the interests of the profession and the broader community.

10. Intellectual property (IP) and knowledge translation

- Unless otherwise agreed, IP generated by OA-funded research is owned by the host institution.
- OA retains a perpetual, non-exclusive licence to use research outputs (with attribution) for advocacy, policy development, education, and professional promotion.

11. Alignment with OA research priorities

- OA research grants and support will be directed toward projects that align with OA's published Research Strategy and Priority Areas.
- OA priorities are reviewed periodically to ensure ongoing relevance to the osteopathic profession and the wider health sector. Osteopathy Australia reserves the right to fund projects outside of these priorities.

12. Acknowledgment and dissemination

- OA will issue a press release and publicise the award in print and electronically. A photo of the Lead Investigator will be required for use in publicising the award.
- Applicants will be notified within 30 days of submission deadline following review by the Osteopathy Australia Research Committee.

- Information submitted in the application and subsequent reports including the recipient's name, institution, project title, and abstract may be utilised in the promotion of the award.
- All research outputs shall acknowledge Osteopathy Australia funding using the wording: *'This research was supported by Osteopathy Australia under Grant No. [insert number].'* Acknowledgment shall appear in journal articles, conference presentations, posters, reports, media releases, public communications, and any other dissemination.

Successful awardees are expected to publish their project in a peer-reviewed journal, provide a practice-relevant summary for *OsteoLife*, and present at least once at an OA seminar, webinar, or other event. Awardees must provide evidence demonstrating that a manuscript has been submitted to a peer-reviewed journal within 12 months of project completion. Grant funds may not be used for dissemination without prior approval. Failure to publish the project in a peer-reviewed journal, provide a practice-relevant summary for *OsteoLife*, and/or present at least once at an OA seminar, webinar, or other event may be considered non-compliance and may preclude eligibility for future funding applications.

13. Reporting and monitoring

- Progress reports must be submitted annually, with grant holders required to report against agreed milestones.
- Progress reports must be submitted prior to any requests for project extensions
- A Final Report is due within 60 days of completion
- Projects 12 months or under require only a Final Report
- Reporting milestones shall be specified in the Funding Agreement.
- Non-compliance will affect eligibility for future funding. All reports shall be submitted to research@osteopathy.org.au.

14. Extension and amendments

The Committee Chair must approve all amendments or extension requests. Extensions up to 50% of the original term (without extra funds) require:

- o Reason for extension
- o Proposed duration
- o Progress report

Interim reports are required every six months for extended projects. Any approved extension period will count towards the exclusion period for reapplying for another grant.

15. Modification or termination of support

The Osteopathy Australia Research Committee may modify or terminate grant funding in accordance with the Research Services Agreement. Awardees shall be notified in writing at least 90 days in advance and may adjust the research plan or terminate the grant.

16. Dispute resolution

Any disputes between OA and awardees (e.g., IP, reporting, publications) are managed under OA governance protocols.

17. Contact

Research and Grants Project Officer: research@osteopathy.org.au or call 02 9410 0099