



LETTERS OF SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH - PROCESS

1. Statement of the College's Policy on Letters of Support for Research

The College of Optometrists will provide letters of support to optometry, vision science, and other researchers to support applications for external funding upon request where the researcher (or research team) has an established track record in relevant areas of research and the request meets the criteria established by the College.

Providing letters of support to researchers does not indicate commitment of funds or in kind services unless specifically stated.

2. Background

The College of Optometrists believes in professional excellence in eye health. We are the professional body for optometry. We promote excellence in eye health by qualifying the profession and delivering guidance, development and training to ensure optometrists provide the best possible care. We promote excellence through the College's affixes, by building the evidence base for optometry, and raising awareness of the profession with the public, commissioners and eye health care professionals.

To this end the College of Optometrists will provide letters of support where such a letter meets the criteria set out below.

Requests for the College's support should be submitted to the Director of Research for review by the appropriate members of the senior management team.

3. Procedure

- a. Any request for a letter of support or reference will be reviewed and approved (or rejected) by the Director of Research and signed by the Chief Executive.
- b. All requests must include the following information or documentation:
 - a lay summary of the proposed research;
 - proof that the research will be conducted at a higher education or other research institution;
 - in the case of a multi-institutional or co-applicant proposal, full costing and institutional contribution information must be submitted;
 - an email or other address where the letter should be sent (if other than directly to the researcher making the request).
- c. The following criteria must be met for the College to provide letters of support for researchers:
 - The research should be relevant to the College's Research Strategy.
 - The researcher or research team must be affiliated to a higher education or other research institution.

- The researcher(s) must have an established track record in relevant areas of research.
 - The request must include the full proposal and documentation outlined above.
 - The proposed research must meet all ethical and other requirements set out by the funder.
 - If successful in securing funding, the researcher(s) must state in their request that they agree to share research findings with the College.
- d. Provided these criteria are met, a letter of support will be provided by the College to the researcher (or directly to the funder). The letter will be signed by the Chief Executive or, in their absence, by the Director of Research in the name of the organisation (the College), not as individuals.
 - e. Unless explicitly stated, any letter of support signed by a representative of the College will not constitute commitment of financial or in kind support or any other form of collaboration or partnership.
 - f. The researcher(s) will inform the College whether they were successful at capturing funding.

4. Details of requests and deadlines

- a. Requests and required documentation should be received four weeks before the deadline required, and a minimum of two weeks before the deadline.
- b. All letters of support will be signed by the Director of Research or Chief Executive within four weeks of receiving the request and documentation.
- c. If the request does not meet the above criteria, and the College does not issue a letter of support, this decision will be communicated to the researcher as soon as possible, and no later than two weeks after receiving the request.

5. Guidance for information to be included in letters of support

The College does not use a template for letters of support, as the types of requests and the kinds of support requested vary. The Director of Research will draft letters according to the funder's requirements.

For guidance purposes, all letters of support issued by the College will generally include the following information:

- a. Title of proposal and names of institutions participating in the application;
- b. Vision and aims of the proposal;
- c. Particular strengths and expertise that the researcher(s), research centres, departments, etc bring to the proposal;
- d. Links to the College's strategic research objectives and research networks;
- e. The details of the level and kind of support or other commitments that the College is offering (where applicable) including in kind support, financial commitments,

allocation of facilities or space, and staff time. In-kind support might also include help or access to networks in place to disseminate research;

- f. The description of financial support should include both the amount (in GBP) and the duration of support. The details of in kind support should include the names and titles of College staff or delegates who are willing to contribute, and any contributions that have been made to date.
- g. Anything else that might strengthen support to the application.

6. Instructions for requesting Letters of Support

All requests should be sent directly to the attention of Mike Bowen, Director of Research, The College of Optometrists, 42 Craven Street, London WC2N 5NG or by email to: michael.bowen@college-optometrists.org

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