CMM International Fund for Global Advancement of Medical Mycology - Round 1

Application Guidelines

A principal aim of the MRC Centre for Medical Mycology and its International Units is to facilitate and enhance global mycology research and development (R&D) aimed at advancing knowledge on fungal pathogens and diseases they cause.

To achieve this aim we are delighted to announce the launch of the inaugural CMM International Fund for Global Advancement of Medical Mycology. Awards (**up to £30k over 2 years**) will support excellent, internationally collaborative research and development, having high potential and a robust pathway to build capacity via significant onward funding.

The final decision on the number of projects to be supported will be made on the quality of the proposals received, the funding available, plans for future bid development and how closely they are aligned with themes of the programme. We are likely to fund up to 10 applications in this round.

The MRC CMM reserves the right to take a portfolio approach to projects, to ensure as many themes as possible are addressed. All awarded projects must show clear plans to obtain further funding to continue/develop the collaborative research established within this project, and where they intend to apply for funding (i.e., which funders/grants and timeline).

Typically, projects will be expected to last up to 24 months in duration. All projects will involve a **Collaborator based in Exeter at the MRC CMM** and at least one **Applicant/Collaborator/Partner in at least one of the CMM International Units** (CMM AFRICA and CMM LATAM). UK academic institutions will be funded at 100% Direct Costs only, other institutions could be at 100% Direct and Indirect costs. Costs for Investigator(s) time supervising the project will not be funded. Exeter collaborators are not paid for their input, but costs for their expenses when hosting visiting researchers/trainees working on the project, or use of the facilities/technologies, can be requested.

Researchers who collaborate with a Brazilian researcher in Sao Paulo State, can request further support for FAPESP-funded PhD scholarships and Postdoctoral fellowships. Eligible applicants may choose to couple funding through this scheme to an application for CMM International Fund to maximally boost research capacity focused on endemic fungal diseases (cryptococcosis, histoplasmosis, sporotrichosis). Please refer to the FAPESP-funded scholarship/fellowship Application Guidelines for more details.

Any queries regarding the application process should be sent to **mrccmm@exeter.ac.uk**.

Call details

1. Applicants eligibility:

The Lead Applicant must be an established Principal Investigator (PI) or an independently funded Early Career Fellow (ECF) with the ability to lead and manage a research project effectively. However, early career researchers (ECRs) are encouraged to apply as co-applicants provided they receive appropriate guidance and mentorship from a more experienced researcher or institutional support. Applicants should demonstrate the necessary skills and capacity to oversee project delivery, financial management, and reporting requirements.

Please note that you can only be the Lead applicant on one proposal, but you can be a Co-applicant or Collaborator on more than one application.

Membership of the CMM-FAILSAFE Network **is a prerequisite** when applying for these funds. The lead applicant and all co-applicants/collaborators are required to be members of the network (for FREE membership apply **here**). Membership applications can be processed in parallel with the funding application.

All projects will have to involve an Exeter's MRC CMM Collaborating PI or ECF. Due to financial constraints, Exeter's MRC CMM members can apply as collaborators only.

At least one Applicant/Collaborator/Partner in the project must be **a Principal Investigator of the CMM International Units** based in the region (to date, CMM AFRICA and CMM LATAM).

2. Remit of the call and Assessment criteria:

All projects must be within the scope of the CMM International Units remit (further information on this can be found on our websites https://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/medicalmycology/internationalunits/ and https://cmm-latam.com/). To be eligible for this 1st Round the project needs to:

For projects related to/involving the CMM AFRICA Unit:

- Cover at least one of the following research themes: Host/pathogen interactions; Immune response to fungal infection; Emerging pathogens and antifungal resistance; Disease epidemiology and clinical management; Biomarkers, diagnostics, and therapeutics; AND/OR Education and Outreach.
- Focus on one of the following mycoses (pillars): Cryptococcosis; Pneumocystosis; Endemic mycoses caused by thermally-dimorphic fungal pathogens (e.g. emergomycosis, histoplasmosis, sporotrichosis, blastomycosis); Candidiasis; AND/OR Co-infections with fungal pathogens.

For projects related to/involving the CMM LATAM Unit:

- Cover at least one of the following research themes: Microbial Evolution and Pathogenesis; Biomarkers and Diagnostics; Burden, Natural History and Clinical Management; One Health; AND/OR Education and Outreach.
- Focus on one of the 3 endemic mycoses (pillars): Histoplasmosis, Sporotrichosis AND/OR Cryptococcosis (*C. gattii*).
- Cover at least one of the following subthemes within each of the mycoses:

Histoplasmosis	Sporotrichosis	Cryptococcosis
Defining epidemiology and socio-economic drivers of Histoplasmosis	Characterizing the epidemiology of sporotrichosis	Evaluating clinical samples
Evaluating the immune response of hosts developing clinical forms of histoplasmosis	Investigating the immunity of different clinical forms of sporotrichosis	Creating a registry notification system;
Establishing new strategies to characterize virulence of Histoplasma capsulatum	Establishing new strategies to characterize virulence of the pathogen	Applying CRISPR-Cas genetic tools to validate in biological models
Developing vaccines to combat fungal pathogens of endemic diseases	Developing base for vaccine studies	Evaluating the susceptibility of clinical isolates to antifungal drugs
		Integrating data from gene co-expression networks

All applications received will go to our Peer Review Panel (PRP) for competitive assessment. PRP members will review and score applications using a standard template. Applications will be scored according to:

- Their scientific merit (50%, including quality of the project and research people & environment), and
- Strategic impact for the future sustainability of the collaborative project (50%), primarily around plans for future grant income.

A list of PRP members will be published in our website prior to PRP review process. PRP members do not input into discussions about an application where they have a conflict of interest (see below for details on conflicts of interest). We may co-opt additional PRP members if required.

Following a review of all applications, a ranked list based on at least three independent reviews will be used to select applications for funding.

All information submitted is held in strictest confidence and will be retained in accordance with our Privacy Policy; all PRP members have signed a confidentiality agreement as a requirement of their committee participation.

3. Value of grant and activities supported:

Project awards will be up to a maximum of £30k. Funding will typically cover a maximum 24-month period for the duration of projects, however, exceptionally, we will consider funding projects for a longer period (this will require a strong case within the 'Resource Justification' section of the application form).

Projects should be costed on a full economic cost (fEC) basis. **Please note**, for academic institutions based in the UK we will award funding at 100% direct costs only. For all other institutions, including

applicants based in industry and LMIC countries, all projects will be funded at 100% fEC (the list of LMIC countries is subject to change by the OECD). However, costs for Investigator(s) time supervising the project will not be funded.

Eligible costs for UK Institutions include: consumables, use of facilities, animal purchase & housing, sample shipment, and travel costs for visits between collaborators if justifiable (costs stated must be reasonable and via economy class only). VAT is allowable when applicable. For overseas Institutions, all of the above apply plus direct research staff salaries (costed on a full fEC basis, as described above) as well as Overheads and Indirect costs as projects can be costed on a full fEC basis. Costs must be in Great British Pounds (GBP). Total project funding requested must not exceed the maximum value allowed (see **section B12.5 of the application form**).

Exeter's MRC CMM collaborators are not paid for their input, but costs for their expenses when hosting visiting researchers/trainees working on the project or travel expenses can be requested.

Activities not supported: Research outside the CMM's objectives and remit of this funding call; research that does not detail clear plans for further follow-on funding; projects from non-members of the CMM-FAILSAFE; large equipment purchases (over £5,000 per item); projects without collaboration with a PI or ECF of the Exeter's MRC Centre for Medical Mycology and a PI actively involved within the CMM International Units; and costs for Investigator(s) time supervising the project.

4. Application process

All successful awards will be subject to the acceptance of our **non-negotiable Terms and Conditions** - we would encourage all applicants to discuss these with the relevant departments in their institution and their co-applicants at an early stage to avoid delays in award acceptance and initiation of the project. Furthermore, collaboration agreements must be formalised prior to the commencement of the project, contingent upon the award being granted. Preparatory measures for these agreements should be established in advance.

Funding requested could be **up to £30,000 and for up to 24 months**. Please complete the application form as directed through the application portal.

Please adhere to the **word limits** where stated. Ensure you complete **all sections** and make clear the **importance and impact of your project** and the pathways to follow-on funding to take your research forward. Make sure you submit all the required supporting documents (listed on the application form). The requirement to complete the **Due Diligence Questionnaire by the Lead Applicant is mandatory** and should be **completed in English**.

Please note, the Due Diligence Questionnaires for **all** project partners will also be a mandatory requirement if an award is made. This will likely take between 3 to 4 weeks post-award notification. We **strongly** encourage the Lead Applicant to initiate this process with their Partners/Collaborators as soon as they can to avoid delays. You can use the Form Due Diligence Questionnaire Project Partners to complete this process in advance and email it us at mrccmm@exeter.ac.uk.

Applications should be made using the online portal and the relevant application form available on our **website** by the closing date on **9th February 2026 at 23:59 (UK time).**

You will receive acknowledgement of your application within ten working days. Please review your application thoroughly before submission to confirm that it meets all specified requirements outlined above. Additionally, ensure that your budget is accurate and complete.

5. Conflict of Interest

Examples of a conflict of interest include Peer Review Panel (PRP) members that are:

- Employed by the same institution as the applicant(s).
- Actively involved in research collaborations with the applicants(s).
- Working closely with the applicant(s), for example as a co-author or PhD Supervisor, or has worked closely in the last 4 years.
- Holding a current position on the governing body of or an honorary position within the institution(s) of the applicant(s)
- In receipt of personal remuneration in excess of £5,000 per annum from the applicant's organisation.
- Personal/family relationship with the applicant(s).

6. Notification of Review Results

Successful projects will be sent award letters confirming the funds available within 3 to 9 weeks of the PRP decision. Dates funding is available for awarded projects will be published in our website. All projects must start within 1 month of the proposed start date provided on the application. To comply with the strict timelines, it is advised that any contractual requirements/issues between collaborators and co-applicants are discussed prior to grant submission.

Unsuccessful applicants will be informed as soon as possible, and specific feedback may be passed on if available although this is not compulsory. Unsuccessful applicants that were scored as "fundable" will be place on a waiting list in case new funding becomes available.

7. Post-award Administration

The University of Exeter will issue an award letter contract with the non-negotiable Terms and Conditions of Award for the awardee; projects may not start until this contract has been fully executed and applicants are given a maximum of 1 month to return the signed documentation. The actual project start date must be confirmed to the CMM Admin Team at mrccmm@exeter.ac.uk.

Before a project can start, as well as ensuring the Terms and Conditions of Award have been brought to the attention of the relevant department within your institution, applicants must consider whether a collaboration agreement is required for the project. If required, collaboration agreements must be in place before the project starts. As stated in the criteria listed in the summary section above, projects which already have these in place will be looked at favourably during the review process.

All awardees will be required to submit **narrative and financial reports**, including publication list and outputs from the project, at the project mid and end points (e.g. 12 and 24 months for a 24-month project). The MRC CMM will publish non-confidential information relating to successful projects on our websites – please refer to our Privacy Policy.

Funds must be spent as detailed in the application. Awardees are required to submit a short narrative and financial reports at the project mid and end points (e.g. 12 and 24 months for a 24-month project) – a reporting template will be supplied. These mandatory reports must be submitted to the CMM Admin Team as per the dates specified in the contract agreement.

Any changes requested to the project timeline must be requested in writing by email at mrccmm@exeter.ac.uk within 30 to 60 days before the change would take effect. The request must include a full justification of the changes requested, new timeline and amended budget. The request will be reviewed and assessed by the CMM's Directorate and we will aim to reply within 30 days.

Payment will be made as follows:

- 50% at project initiation (once the actual project start date has been confirmed to us);
- 30% on approval of the midpoint interim project report;
- 20% on approval of the end of project report (all reports are mandatory).

Payment will be for **actual expenditure** up to the value agreed in the original award letter. Funding will be awarded at 80% fEC for academic institutions based in the UK (with the remaining 20% of their project costs match funded by their institution) and at 100% fEC for all other institutions, including applicants based in industry and LMIC countries. Note that Principal Investigator/Academic time on the project will not be funded.

CMM does not require receipts to be submitted but these **must** be kept by the host institution as they may be required for future audits. The awardee's host institution must follow their standard procedures for financial accounts. Any underspend on grants must be returned to CMM.

Awardees are required to submit their project's results for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, or as a case-study, adhering to open access requirements as set out in the Terms and Conditions of Award.

A non-confidential lay summary of the project's outcomes, taken from the final report, will be published on the CMM International Units website and in other publicity in accordance with our Privacy Policy.

8. Publicising Outputs and Data Protection

Successful projects will be listed on the CMM website and in other promotional literature, with a non-confidential abstract outlining the work proposed, as well as updates with regard to information provided within the interim and final reports. All information will be used in accordance with our Privacy Policy, which also includes details of our document retention policy.

Any publications, outputs or downstream funding must acknowledge the funds awarded in accordance with the Terms and Conditions of Award.

Copies of applications will be made available to our PRP who will use information provided for reviewing the proposal and post-award administration. PRP members may co-opt external members if required. CMM may choose to publish further non-confidential details of awards, awardees, and information about successful projects, in accordance with our Privacy Policy.

9. Use of Human Samples or Data

CMM and the University of Exeter expects all research involving human participants to be undertaken in accordance with UKRI policies and guidance available from https://www.ukri.org/publications/mrc-guidance-for-applicants/ethics-and-approvals/#section-using-human-samples-. These include:

- Good Research Practice (2012)
- Medical research involving adults who cannot consent (2007)
- Medical Research Involving Children (2004)
- Human Tissue and Biological Samples for Use in Research (2014)
- Personal Information in Medical Research (2000).

Independent Research Ethics Committee approval is required for research that involves human participants (whether patients or healthy volunteers) or records. Such approval is also required for certain studies of human tissues.

In the case of social science research, CMM recommends that award holders follow the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics (revised 2015) which highlights the responsibility of the research organisation for ensuring that the research is subject to appropriate ethics review.

Research involving human participants in developing societies presents specific ethical challenges and the MRC guidelines Research Involving Human Participants in Developing Societies must be followed.

Award holders whose research involves the removal, use or storage of human tissue as specified in the relevant legislation must:

- Comply with the appropriate legislation, i.e. the Human Tissue Act 2004 and/or the Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006
- Follow the relevant standards and Codes of Practice issued by the Human Tissue Authority (HTA) (the MRC Regulatory Support Centre has summarised these).
- Follow the MRC guidance detailed in Human Tissue and Biological Samples for Use in medical Research (2014).

For research taking place outside the UK, in addition to UK guidelines, local national guidelines and international best practice must be followed. All legal requirements for the import/export of biological materials must be adhered to. The lead applicant is responsible for ensuring that co-applicants and collaborators adhere to all relevant ethics requirements.

10. Use of Animals

CMM and the University of Exeter supports the principles of the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement). Award holders are expected to abide by the core principles set out in the cross-funder guidance 'Responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research: Expectations of the major research councils and charitable funding bodies'. If the research involves the use of animals (rodents, rabbits, sheep, goats, pigs, cattle xenopus) overseas, rather than in the UK, you should also complete the appropriate additional questions on the use of [species] overseas' forms, and submit it with your application. **If your application includes animals not listed here, please complete the form for pigs and tailor to your specific circumstances.**

The standards and principles of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 must be observed. All awards are made on the absolute condition that no work that is controlled by the Act will begin until the necessary licences have been obtained from the Home Office (or equivalent body if work is outside the UK). When animals are purchased from commercial suppliers, in-country suppliers should be used wherever possible, to minimise the risk of suffering during transport. All research involving non-human primates must comply with the NC3Rs Guidelines: Primate accommodation, care and use. The lead applicant is responsible for ensuring that co-applicants adhere to all relevant ethics requirements.

11. Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO)

National regulations and international best practice must be followed. Researchers who carry out genetic modification should be familiar with the legislative requirements and with the Scientific Advisory Committee on Genetic Modification (Contained Use) guidance.

12. Dangerous Pathogens

Research organisations accommodating projects involving the use of dangerous pathogens must comply with appropriate local and national regulations and safeguarding.

13. Useful Resources

- FAQs
- Terms and Conditions
- Privacy Policy
- CMM-FAILSAFE Network Membership
- CMM members
- CMM AFRICA Unit members
- CMM LATAM website