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CENTRE FOR
ORIGIN &
PREVALENCE OF
LIFE

COPL Research Projects
Terms of Reference
Issue 1.1 (issued)
25 Apr. 2023

Research Projects – Terms of Reference

1   Definition

Research Projects are aiming to support joint collaborations between COPL Members, ideally in different departments. Research Projects proposals are selected by a competitive internal selection process. Calls for Research Projects are issued annually.

Note: The Terms of Reference for the COPL *Doctoral Fellowship* Programme is described in a separate document.

2   Scope of the Research Projects

The scope of the Research Projects that may be proposed should address core scientific objectives of the COPL:

- Defining the chemical and physical processes that generate the molecular building blocks for life and drive the transition to emergent biological entities.
- Characterising the diversity of planetary environments.
- Quantifying the capability of planetary environments to meet, maintain and diversify conditions for complex life and how life shapes planetary environments.
- Investigating non-standard life and life in extreme environments.

3   Funding, Duration and Start Time

3.1   Budget per Research Project

In this call, the total budget available for Research Projects is CHF 400'000.
For each project, requested support is of minimum CHF 50'000 and maximum CHF 150'000.

3.2   Start and Duration of Research Projects

The project should start no earlier than 1 September 2023 but not later than 31December 2023. The maximum duration of Research Projects is 24 months.

4   Eligibility

4.1   Eligible Persons and Restrictions

Research Projects are conducted under the responsibility of a Principal Investigator (PI). The project may include one or more Co-Investigators (Co-Is) with well-defined roles.

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The PI must be a COPL affiliated group leader at the time of the call and remain a member for the full duration of the project. Each Co-I must be member of the research group of a COPL affiliated group leader.

Each COPL member is eligible to propose **one** project at a time for each call (as PI or Co-I).

4.2 Eligible Cost

The eligible cost of Research Projects typically includes:
- Salary costs (can be doctoral student, postdoc or technical staff)
- Research Equipment
- Consumables and agents, mission expedition costs
- A fixed allocation of 6'000 CHF/year for conferences and seminars

5 Assessment

Applications are assessed by an ad-hoc Selection Committee based on 3 reviewer reports. Reviewers should not have a direct conflict of interest with the PI and Co-I. The PI or Co-I of a proposal cannot be a member of the Selection Committee.

The assessment of all applications is made according to Assessment Guidelines. Applications will be assessed by the Selection Committee against the following criteria:
- Appropriateness of the proposed project to the objectives of COPL (see 2 above)
- Scientific impact and interdisciplinarity of the proposed project.
- Feasibility and resource justification.
- Other sources of support.

6 Timeline

Important

      a) 4 weeks to respond to the call.
      b) 4 weeks to get reviewers feed-back.
      c) 1 week for the Selection Committee to meet and PI notifications.

GOAL: PIs of Research Projects to be notified on 30th June (-9 weeks = call must be issued on 28th April)

7 Applications

7.1 Project Applications

Project applications must include the following:

- **_Research proposal_:** a general description of the proposed research to be carried out. This should include context, objectives, methodology, key milestones, and expected

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results of the proposed work. A brief description of any complementary work being carried out by the lead applicant or team proposing the project.

- ***Relevance to COPL scientific objectives:*** a brief discussion of how the proposed research aligns with the COPL scientific objectives and facilitates cross-disciplinary research among COPL-affiliated research groups.

- ***Requested resources:*** a detailed explanation of resources requested. Requested resources should include appropriate and realistic estimation of costs supporting, for example, research staff and/or students, equipment, analytical facilities, research-related travel, etc.

- ***Justification of resources:*** a brief justification for resources requested to support the proposed work, and information about any other support that might be available to contribute to the proposed research.

- ***Proposed reviewers:*** the name, affiliation and email-address of potential reviewers for the project. The proposal is not binding for the selection of the actual reviewers.

7.2　Successful Applications

The PI and Co-I(s) of successful applications will conduct their Research Project in line with the approach laid out in the 'Project Guidelines' document. An intermediate report and a final report will be made available according to conditions set in the award letter and the Project Guidelines.

8　Documents

The following documents are relevant for the definition and operations of 'Research Projects'

8.1.1　Generic Documents

- Internal Rules of Procedure of the Centre for Origin and Prevalence of Life
- Terms of Reference (this document)
- Assessment Guidelines (for internal use)
- Application Review Form (for internal use)
- Research Project Application Form (public to COPL)
- Award Letter (and condition) (for each successful application)
- Project Guidelines (for each successful application)

8.1.2　For each call

- Call Procedure with dates and announcements (for internal use)

ToR (this document) and assessment guidelines must be reviewed by SSC.

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9 Acronyms

Acronym	Description
Co-I	Co-Investigator
COPL	Centre for Origin and Prevalence of Life
MO	COPL Managing Office
PI	Principal Investigator
RP	Research Project
SC	Selection Committee
SSC	Scientific Steering Committee
ToR	Terms of Reference

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10 Document Changes

Date	Author	Change Description
25 Apr. 2023	MB	Update following the DIR meeting on 24 Apr. 2023
20 Apr. 2023	MB	Issue 1.0
13 Apr. 2023	MB	Updates following the SSC meeting
04 Apr. 2023	MB	Updates after first review by the Directorate
29 Mar. 2023	MB	Minor editorial updates
23 Mar. 2023	MB	Split document to separate RPs and Doctoral Fellowships
17 Mar. 2023	DQ	First revision by DQ
13 Mar. 2023	MB	New document