

# Organ-on-a-Chip Technologies Network Sabbatical Funding Q&A

## GENERAL PANEL FEEDBACK - post round 1

The review panel particularly welcomed applications that provided exciting, discovery-led proposals between new collaborators, hence proposal which were less incremental in nature.

There was also positive reception for projects that can demonstrate how the financial support has led to wider benefit in the organ-on-a-chip field i.e. proposals that are:

- clearly pump priming with a strong potential for leverage of further funding;
- projects that provide important solutions to support other researchers in the field;
- projects with ECR training angles.

In all instances, a well thought-through plan for achieving this was important.

The funding requires new collaborations between the PI and Co-I on the project. The panel really wishes to see genuine new collaborations that would not be otherwise possible and therefore applications where the PI and CoIs are from the same institution are unlikely to be competitive.

Evidence of how the new collaboration enables the scientific advancement was necessary information.

Applications that bring new collaborations across disciplines are of particular interest.

Proposals need to be appropriately costed and approved by the host institution to avoid rejection without review.

## ELIGIBILITY

### Q1 Who is eligible to apply for funding

A:

Please see the table below outlining the potential applicants, and their eligible project roles:

<b>Table 1: Applicant criteria</b>	PI	Co-I	Researcher Co-I	Named researcher
Permanent academic/clinical staff	✓	✓	✓	✓
Industrial staff		✓		
Fellows & PDRAs		✓	✓	✓
Students (PhD, MSc, BSc)				✓

**Q2: I have a PhD student who I would like to send overseas to validate our chip design using two organoid models. Would this sort of project be eligible for this funding award? Also note the requirement for new collaborators as Co-Is.**

**A:**

Yes, but concerning PhD student involvement: Salary requests are not permitted; travel, subsistence and consumables are funded. Any involvement must follow [UKRI guidelines](#), limiting the hours they can work. We strongly advise discussing PhD student involvement with the [OOACT leadership team](#) prior to submission.

(1.11 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)

The Named Researcher is permitted to undertake their sabbatical overseas. However, the application must justify why this approach is needed; why the work cannot be done in the UK; and how this will benefit the UK.

(1.7 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)

**Q3:**

**Are ERC Fellows funded by EC under H2020 research eligible to apply for funding?**

**A:**

ERC Fellows are eligible to apply. Please see **Table 1: Applicant criteria**

**Q4: We have checked with the PhD student's fellowship and they can grant an internship of up to 3 months. Would the student be allowed to be part of this project and travel to our industry partner to do part of the project over there?**

**A:**

It would be fine for a student to undertake the sabbatical as an internship but as this is not a new collaboration, it is unlikely to be viewed favourably.

## COSTINGS

### **Table 2: Funding information**

Applicants can apply for:

Research salary: up to a maximum of £15,500 including salary associated overheads

Consumables: up to £5,000 (Consumables considerably more than 5K will unlikely be offered funding)

Travel, accommodation & subsistence: up to £5,000

**NB:** There is some flexibility in terms of funding allocation across headings if the total does not exceed £25,500 (100%fEC). All costs must be fully justified, particularly where flexibility in allocation between categories is requested.

**Q5: Which applicants can be considered for salary costings?**

**A:**

Salary can be met to a maximum amount of £15,500 (including overheads) for the "Named Researcher" only. Salary cannot be claimed for any other project applicants including: industrialists, PhD students or overseas researchers.

(2.3 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)

Overheads can be requested for the Named Researcher's salary only in the total project cost.

(2.4 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)

**Q6: We have a PhD student working on the project - would the sabbatical fund the students travel and accommodation?**

**A:**

The researcher undertaking the sabbatical can be from any sector and can also be a student, as long as the UKRI guidelines concerning funding are adhered to.

All travel, subsistence and consumables are funded.

For any individual undertaking a sabbatical, any involvement must follow [UKRI guidelines](#), limiting the hours they can work. We strongly advise discussing PhD student involvement with the [OOACT leadership team](#) prior to submission.

(1.11 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)

**Q7: Is there any flexibility in how much we need to spend on consumables?**

**A:**

For projects which require small equipment or additional spend on specific headers, there is some flexibility if the total amount does not exceed £25,500 (100% FEC). Any project requesting considerably more than £5,000 for consumables is unlikely to be funded.

(2.5 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)

**Q8: Do we need to include overhead costs within our project costings? If so, are these included in the total project cost or within “cost to funder”?**

**A:**

Overheads can be requested for the Named Researcher’s salary only. There is clear instruction on where to include costs on the application form.

(2.4 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)

**Q9: The guidance says the scheme will pay for a salary of up to £15.5k – is this just for the salary of the academic on sabbatical or can it also pay for some time of an academic at the host institution?**

**A:**

Salary can be met to a maximum amount of £15,500 for the “Named Researcher” only. Salary cannot be claimed for any other project applicants.

(2.3 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)

**Q10: If the host institution was expected to pay the salary of the person visiting on a sabbatical it would mean making them a short term employee. Is it possible to transfer that aspect of the received funds to the home institute of the visiting researcher so that they can pay the salary costs?**

**A:**

Management of funds is the responsibility of the PI’s academic institution which will receive the monies.

The academic institution and the host institution will be responsible for making any necessary arrangements for the transfer of funds. (2.8 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)

The network has no expectation that researcher salary must be paid by the host. It is fine for the researcher to be paid by either party.

## PROJECT DELIVERY

### **Q11: When is the earliest start time for costing purposes?**

**A:**

The following factors need considering when setting project start dates for costing purposes:

- The date for the Funding Prioritisation Meeting for the current call can be found on our funding webpage: [www.organonachip.org.uk/funding/sabbaticalfunding](http://www.organonachip.org.uk/funding/sabbaticalfunding)
- A decision will be made within 14 days of this meeting and offer letters sent to successful applicants along with the funding agreement for signing.
- The funding agreement requires signing by several parties including project PIs and Co-Is. Please be aware that this might take a couple of weeks to complete. The funding agreement template can you found on the above webpage

(2.9 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)

### **Q12: What is the project completion deadline?**

**A:**

We will require all project spend to be completed by the relevant award round deadline which is available on our funding webpage: [www.organonachip.org.uk/funding/sabbaticalfunding](http://www.organonachip.org.uk/funding/sabbaticalfunding)

(4.9 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)

### **Q13: Would you be able to provide funding for an honorary fellow and do you expect this person to return to a post after the sabbatical?**

**A:**

It is not crucial that the researcher returns to post after the sabbatical but we want to support the OOAC field but supporting people as well as ideas – so the project is more likely to be successful if continued researcher commitment to this field is evident.

Please see Table 1: Applicant criteria

The contractual status for the Named Researcher can include the following:

- Permeant
- Honorary – after their current contract finishes
- Employed/in post when the project starts. They don't need to be in post beforehand.

(1.12 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)

### **Q14: Does the PDRA need to in post at the time the project starts?**

**A:**

The contractual status for the Named Researcher can include the following:

- Permeant
- Honorary – after their current contract finishes
- Employed/in post when the project starts. They don't need to be in post beforehand.

(1.12 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)

**Q15: Can we organise an exchange of PhD students (2 weeks in each lab) rather than PDRA? It would be more beneficial if 2 people, one from each lab, could learn new techniques/approaches practiced in the other lab.**

**A:**

Yes, the sabbatical can cover the following if the benefits to the approach are described:

- Two PhD student exchanges between labs
- Time to set up systems in home lab

(1.13 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)

## COLLABORATORS

**Q16: I work for a pharmaceutical company and currently collaborating with university academics to develop an OOAC platform. I am interested in submitting an application for one of the PhD students on our project to be a “Named Researcher”. Would this be a suitable application to submit?**

**A:**

This is unlikely to be competitive as you are not proposing a new collaboration.

**Q17: We are considering starting a collaboration with an OOAC industrialist involving our PhD students. Does the sabbatical cover both of the following?**

- spending time in the industrial lab to learn their technologies
- time to set up the system back in their “home” lab

**A:**

Yes, the sabbatical can cover the following if clear benefits are made to these approaches in the application:

- Two PhD student exchanges between labs
- Time to set up systems in home lab after sabbatical period

(1.12 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)

**Q18: How do I check if a potential collaborative partner is an OOACT Network Member?**

**A:**

All applicants on a project must be members of the Organ-on-a-Chip Technologies Network. Membership of the network is subject to [registration](#). Potential partners can be identified through our website for [OOAC membership](#). (1.2 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)

**Q19: Can we use animal cells rather than human cells in our OOACT pump priming project?**

**A:**

There are no restrictions on the use of animal cells rather than human cells in sabbatical project applications - as long as relevance to the OOAC research field is shown and how it will help advance the systems for recapitulating human organs.

**Note:** Please ensure you comply with current legislation regarding use of any human or animal tissue under relevant regulations.

(1.4 Sabbatical Guidance and Regulations Document)