

The Josephine Circle Grant Program Guidelines

1. Background

The Josephine Circle was established to support Early and Mid-Career female researchers at QIMR Berghofer. Without philanthropic support, brilliant female researchers can become stuck in a funding limbo that could ultimately end their research – research that could be the next breakthrough.

2. Purpose

The Josephine Circle grant program is designed to provide support at critical career stages where female researchers may face barriers to securing funding and establishing research independence. In doing so, the program aims to address inequities in research funding, support career progression, and help ensure talented female researchers are retained within the research sector and supported to progress into more senior research and leadership positions.

3. Grant Funding

Early Career Research Grant \$50,000 and \$150,000 for Mid-Career Research Grant, with all funds to be utilised within two years.

The number of grants awarded each year will depend on the number of donors to The Josephine Circle Grant Program.

4. Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must:

- Be female
- Hold a research appointment at QIMR Berghofer and meet the eligibility criteria outlined below.
- Hold a doctoral degree (PhD or equivalent research doctorate)
- Be classified as:
 - o Early Career Researcher: within eight years of PhD conferral * (adjusted for eligible career interruptions).
 - o Mid-Career Researcher: within fifteen years of PhD conferral * (adjusted for eligible career interruptions).
- Hold an employment contract at QIMR Berghofer extending for a minimum of 12 months from the grant application closing date.

5. Eligible Appointments

Eligible applicants must hold a research appointment at QIMR Berghofer at the level of Research Officer, Senior Research Officer or another position formally classified by QIMR Berghofer as an equivalent research appointment.

6. Ineligible Applicants

The following individuals are not eligible to apply:

- Employees of affiliated entities
- Group Leaders, Senior Group Leaders, Distinguished Scientists
- Previous Josephine Circle Grant recipients during the one-year exclusion period following receipt of a grant

The senior positions outlined above are not eligible as the Josephine Circle Grant is intended to support researchers who are still establishing their research careers and progressing towards research independence and leadership roles.

7. Recognition of Career Interruptions*

QIMR Berghofer recognises that researchers may experience career disruptions that affect the progression of their research careers.

Periods of eligible career disruption may be considered when determining an applicant's eligibility. These may include:

- parental leave
- caregiving responsibilities
- illness or injury
- time away from research

Applicants must provide sufficient information to support any claimed interruption.

The Chief Scientist will assess interruptions against published criteria and determine the adjusted career stage.

8. Exceptional Circumstances

The Josephine Circle Grant aims to apply eligibility requirements consistently and transparently. Exceptional circumstances may be considered only where an applicant's situation is not adequately addressed by these Guidelines and strict application of the criteria would be inconsistent with the purpose of the program.

Applicants seeking consideration under exceptional circumstances must provide a written explanation and supporting information at the time of application.

The Chief Scientist will determine requests for exceptional circumstances having regard to:

- the purpose of the Josephine Circle Grants;
- fairness and equity across applicants;
- consistency with previous determinations; and
- the intent of the published eligibility criteria.

All exceptional circumstance determinations will be documented as part of the grant assessment record.

9. Conflict of Interest

Any person involved in assessing or endorsing applications must declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest.

Individuals with a conflict must not participate in assessment or decision-making relating to that application.

10. Selection Process

- Applications are submitted through the published Expression of Interest process.
- Program Heads review applications against eligibility criteria
- Program Heads endorse eligible applicants
- Chief Scientist makes the final selection of nominees to progress through to the Josephine Circle Grant Pitch process based on:
 - o eligibility against the published criteria;
 - o alignment with the purpose of the Josephine Circle Grant.
- Each Program will have a nominee for:
 - o one Early Career Researcher; and
 - o one Mid-Career Researcher

11. Grant Assessment Criteria

Approved applicants will present their research project and be assessed against the following criteria by members of The Josephine Circle.

Alignment with Program Objectives

The extent to which the proposed project aligns with the purpose and objectives of the Josephine Circle Grant and how it will contribute to the program's intended outcomes and measures of success.

Impact

The potential for the proposed research to translate into tangible benefits for patients or the medical research sector in Australia and beyond.

Need

The extent to which funding is required to enable the applicant to undertake and advance their research. Existing grant or philanthropic support will not preclude eligibility; however, preference may be given to researchers demonstrating a clear funding need.