

Approved by the Rector's Council, N18 protocol, 2023

**Program of Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy's Program "Research  
Fellowship"**

## **Article 1. General provisions**

1.1 The goal of the "Research Fellowship" program at the Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy (hereinafter referred to as TMA) is to promote research activity in biomedicine, biotechnology, medicine, health sciences, medical education, and related scientific fields. This is achieved through an open competition for applicants holding a doctorate degree or an equivalent academic qualification. The program selects and finances project applications submitted by qualified candidates.

1.2 This document defines:

- the procedure for submission, review and evaluation of applications for participation in TMA's "Research Fellowship" program;
- the procedure for implementation and monitoring of selected applications within the program, conducted under the auspices and affiliation of TMA.

## **Article 2. Definition of terms**

2.1 Report (interim/final) - information on the performance of activities outlined by the project.

2.2 Applicant - a natural person, either a citizen of Georgia or a foreign country, who submits a project application. The Applicant must hold a doctorate or equivalent academic degree in biomedicine, biotechnology, medicine, health sciences, medical education, or related scientific fields obtained within 3 years prior to participating in this program. Additionally, the Applicant must not be a member of the TMA Staff (academic and/or invited).

2.3 Bioethics International Committee - a collegial body established by the decree of the TMA Rector, tasked with participating in the review of project applications.

2.4 Budget - the total amount of funding requested for project implementation, categorized by spending categories.

2.5 Funding body - Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy.

2.6 Supporting personnel – a person employed within the project, tasked with solving technical issues related to project implementation. Supporting personnel is TMA staff and/or student.

2.7 Funded person/Fellow - selected applicant.

2.8 Expert - a natural person, whether a citizen of Georgia or a foreign country, must possess qualifications in a specific scientific direction. These qualifications must be confirmed by the individual's scientific publications and/or biographical data.

2.9 Commission - a collegial body created by the TMA rector, comprising experts responsible for reviewing applications and performance of evaluations. The commission must consist of a minimum of three members.

2.10 Mentor - an individual with a doctoral or equivalent academic degree, who is staff member of TMA (either academic or invited), and possesses demonstrated experience in scientific research. This experience is evidenced by publications in international refereed and peer-reviewed scientific journals.

2.11 Monitoring - monitoring of the funded project, its implementation and activities defined by the project, review of reports.

2.12 Project - the proposal submitted by the selected for funding applicant, should include a statement detailing the aims and objectives of the research, the methods of implementation, expected results, and an attached timeframe outlining the activities to be implemented.

2.13 Scientific Grant Committee - a collegial body created by the TMA rector, tasked with participating in the selection process of students for project participation and monitoring the implementation of projects.

2.14 Proposal - the proposal submitted by the applicant, which is executed in accordance with the requirements specified in this rule.

2.15 Student - a student of TMA with the active status.

2.16 Agreement - the agreement signed between the TMA and the funded applicant/fellow.

2.17 Evaluation criteria - guidelines for evaluation of the project application determined by the present rule with reference to points.

### **Article 3. Administration of the program "Research Fellowship"**

3.1 The program "Research Fellowship" is funded from the TMA budget.

3.2 The program "Research Fellowship" is administered by the Scientific-Research and PhD Department of TMA.

3.3 The Scientific-Research and PhD department of TMA is responsible for:

3.3.1 Program announcement.

3.3.2 Development of the procedure for conducting the program and the form of proposal, determining the conditions and deadlines for receiving proposals, their public announcement, as well as developing the form of project performance reports.

3.3.3 Within the framework of the program, to determine compliance of the application submitted within the deadline with the form defined by this rule by signing the relevant protocol within 3 working days; In case of finding a technical error in the application, the applicant can correct it within 3 working days.

3.3.4 Selection of experts by taking into account the specificity of the proposals and the presentation of candidates to the Rector's Council for the formation of the commission.

3.3.5 Presentation of proposals to the International Bioethics Committee and Commission for review and evaluation.

3.3.6 Presentation of the results of project applications review by the International Bioethics Committee and Commission to the TMA Rector's Council for approval.

3.3.7 Publication of program administration results.

3.3.8 Announcing the selection competition for students to participate in the funded projects within the framework of the program, as well as establishing and publicly announcing the conditions for accepting student applications, in collaboration with the fellow, their mentor, and the Scientific Grant Committee.

3.3.9 To determine the compliance of students' applications for participation in the project financed within the framework of the program with the form specified in this rule by signing the relevant protocol within 3 working days; If a technical error is found in the student's application, the student can correct it within 3 working days.

3.3.10 Transfer of students' applications to the authorized representative of the relevant project and members of the Scientific Grant Committee for consideration and evaluation.

3.4 Within the framework of this program, the function of the Bioethics International Committee of TMA is to review applications and prepare a conclusion on their bioethical aspects within 5 working days.

3.5 The conclusion of the TMA Bioethics International Committee as well as the recommendation and/or any other decision within the framework of this program, is made in the form of a protocol.

3.6 The function of the commission, within the framework of this program, is:

3.6.1 Review and evaluation of applications in accordance with the evaluation criteria defined by this rule.

3.6.2 Identification of applications recommended for funding and submission to the Scientific-Research and PhD department of TMA within 10 working days.

3.7 The conclusion of the commission, as well as the recommendation and/or any other decision within the framework of this program, is made in the form of a protocol.

3.8 The function of the scientific grant committee of TMA within the framework of this program is:

3.8.1 Competitive selection of students (minimum - 2, maximum - 4 students) for participation in projects funded within the program, taking into account the specificity determined by the project authorized person and in accordance with the procedure defined in Article 5 of the present rule.

3.8.2 Monitoring of funded projects according to the monitoring procedure defined in this rule.

3.9 The decisions of the Scientific Grant Committee of TMA, within the framework of this program, are made in the form of protocol.

**Article 4. Selection of the applicant for the "Research Fellowship" program, evaluation criteria and calculation of a unified rating score**

4.1 The procedure for admission to the TMA program "Research Fellowship" is conducted through an open competition. Eligible participants are natural persons, citizens of Georgia or foreign countries, who have obtained a doctoral or equivalent academic degree in biomedicine, biotechnology, medicine, health sciences, medical education, or related scientific fields within three years prior to participating in the program. Additionally, participants must not be TMA staff (academic and/or invited) members.

4.2 The open competition includes two stages:

- Evaluation by the commission of the scientific research concept presented in the form defined by the program and attached documents.
- Interview of the applicant with the commission.

4.3 At the first stage, the applicant must submit in English by sending to the e-mail address [research@tma.edu.ge](mailto:research@tma.edu.ge):

- The concept of scientific research - relevance, innovativeness and importance (Annex 1).
- The professional biography of the applicant should present research competence and skills, including details of research achievements such as funded and implemented projects, scientific publications, and any other additional information relevant to their scientific competence.
- Letters of recommendation (at least 1) confirming the information specified in the applicant's professional biography.

4.4 In the first stage, the information submitted by the applicant will be individually evaluated by the members of the commission, in accordance with the criteria presented below.

Criteria	C	B	A	Grading according to (A/B/C) criteria
	1	2	3	Maximum 9 points
Concept of research – relevance, innovativeness and meaning				
Applicant’s research productivity				
Applicant’s scientific achievements				

Evaluation scheme for each criterion:  
 A – 3 (the information submitted by the applicant thoroughly meets the criterion)  
 B – 2 (minor errors and inaccuracies are noted in the information provided by the applicant)  
 C – 1 (there are significant gaps and inaccuracies in the information provided by the applicant)  
 The total maximum score for the project application is 9

Summary comments on the application:

4.5 In the first stage, the applicant's evaluation is calculated as the arithmetic average of the individual evaluations provided by the commission members. In the second stage, applicants who received an assessment of at least 6 points in the first stage and did not receive a C (1 point) grade in any of the criteria will be admitted.

4.6 Interview - at the second, final stage of applicant selection, the applicant is interviewed by the commission. During the interview, the applicant presents the research concept to the commission in the form of a 30-minute presentation, covering aspects such as relevance, innovation, research methodology, expected results and their importance, further perspectives of project development, practical importance, etc. The applicant also answers questions from the commission.

4.7 In the second stage, the information submitted by the applicant will be individually evaluated by the members of the commission for compliance with the criteria presented below:

Criteria	C	B	A	Grading according to (A/B/C) criteria
	1	2	3	Maximum 15 points
Concept of research – relevance, innovativeness and meaning				
Applicant’s research methodology				
Expected results of the applicant's research and their practical significance				
Research fellowship as an opportunity for career development of the applicant				
Opportunities for research development and technology transfer				

Evaluation scheme for each criterion:  
 A – 3 (the information submitted by the applicant thoroughly meets the criterion)  
 B – 2 (minor errors and inaccuracies are noted in the information provided by the applicant)  
 C – 1 (there are significant gaps and inaccuracies in the information provided by the applicant)  
 The total maximum score is 15

Summary comments on the application:

4.8 In the second stage, the assessment of the applicant is calculated as the arithmetic average of the

individual assessments provided by the commission members. Applicants with a score of 10 or more in the second stage and no C (1 point) grade in any criterion will be considered for funding.

4.9 Applicants whose total grade as a result of both the first and second stages is 16 points or more, and who did not receive a grade of C (1 point) in any criterion in either stage, will be considered for funding.

4.10 The duration of the project can be 12 months.

4.11 The applicant selected for funding must have a mentor, and in the case of an interdisciplinary project, a group of mentors may be required. These mentors should include TMA staff (academic and/or invited) with competence in the relevant scientific direction(s) of the planned research.

4.12 Participation of at least two and at most four students is mandatory in the project. The selection of students to participate in the project is carried out by competition in accordance with the procedure defined in this document (Article 5).

4.13 It is possible to include a maximum of 1 person as supporting personnel in the project.

4.14 After the completion of the project, the material and technical means purchased with the fellowship funds remain the property of TMA.

4.15 To implement the project, it is necessary to use the infrastructure of TMA.

4.16 For the implementation of the project, it is additionally possible to use the infrastructure of TMA partner organizations.

4.17 The applicant(s) selected for funding, in agreement with the mentor, must submit the project budget in the form requested by TMA, which may include the following spending categories, at the time of signing the contract:

4.17.1 Labor remuneration of students participating in the project - in the amount of 100.00 (one hundred) GEL per month.

4.17.2 Salary of support staff - maximum 150.00 (one hundred fifty) GEL per month.

4.17.3 Costs of purchase and service of equipment (equipment, reagents, consumables, etc.) necessary for laboratory works;

4.17.4 Costs of research results publication.

Expenditure category	Unit cost	Total cost, GEL
Labor remuneration of students		
Labor remuneration of supporting personnel		
Costs of purchase and service of equipment (equipment, reagents, consumables, etc.) necessary for laboratory works		
Costs of research results publication		

4.18 After the approval of the list of applicant(s) selected for funding by the Rector's Council based on the decision of the commission and the submission of the Scientific-Research and PhD department of TMA, an agreement is signed between the funded person(s)/fellow(s), their mentors and TMA.

4.19 It is mandatory to publish the results of the scientific-research project in the form of a an article in an international refereed and peer-reviewed journal indexed in Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, ERIH PLUS databases.

- 4.20 In the scientific article, the reference “The article [Title] was supported within the framework of the Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy program "Research fellowship”, is mandatory.
- 4.21 Monitoring the implementation of projects funded within this program is performed by the Scientific Grant Committee.
- 4.22 The monitoring procedure involves the submission of an interim/final report by the fellow within 10 working days after the end of the reporting period in the form specified in this rule (Annex 2).
- 4.23 The reporting period is defined as 3 months.
- 4.24 It is mandatory for the fellow to conduct a public lecture for the teaching staff and students of TMA to present the results of their research and planned activities.
- 4.25 It is mandatory for the fellow to carry out research activities in affiliation with TMA during the period specified by the agreement.
- 4.26 It is mandatory for the funded person(s) to publish the results obtained within the scope of the scientific internship in affiliation with TMA, including cases where these results are published after the period of validity determined by the scientific internship agreement.
- 4.27 TMA is authorized to verify the information provided by the fellow(s) at any stage.
- 4.28 In case of confirmation that the fellow(s) provided false information, TMA is authorized to terminate the project and restrict the further participation of the fellow's mentor in TMA scientific-research activities and programs, including the grant program.

#### **Article 5. Selection of students for participation in the project**

- 5.1 The selection of students to participate in the project is carried out through an open competition
- 5.2 Any TMA student with active status and a GPA exceeding 2.0 can participate in the competition.
- 5.3 In order to participate in the competition, the student must submit to the email address [research@tma.edu.ge](mailto:research@tma.edu.ge) in English: a) a letter of motivation (Annex 3), and b) a CV
- 5.4 The documents submitted by the student participating in the competition are evaluated by the authorized representative of the relevant project and the Scientific Grant Committee.
- 5.5 The criteria for evaluating the application submitted by the student are:

Criteria	C	B	A	Grading according to (A/B/C) criteria
	1	2	3	Maximum 12 points
Content value of the cover letter				
Clear formulation of the student’s position				
Grammatical and linguistic fluency				
Ability to meet current demand for text volume				
Evaluation scheme for each criterion: A – 3 (the information submitted by the applicant thoroughly meets the criterion) B – 2 (minor errors and inaccuracies are noted in the information provided by the applicant) C – 1 (there are significant gaps and inaccuracies in the information provided by the applicant) The total maximum score is 12				
Summary comments on the application:				

5.6 A student's application with an evaluation of 8 or more points, and without receiving a grade of C (1 point) in any criterion, will be considered for inclusion in the project.

5.7 The evaluation of the student's application is carried out individually by the persons participating in the evaluation process. The final grade of the student's application is the arithmetic mean of the individual grades.

#### **Article 6. Mentor**

6.1 The mentor must hold a doctoral or equivalent academic degree, have research experience in the scientific direction related to the research topic of the person selected for funding, and be an academic staff member of TMA.

6.2 The mentor confirms their consent to provide scientific guidance to the person selected for funding by signing the contract between the fellow, the mentor(s), and TMA. The mentor is actively involved in the research and career development of the person selected for funding.

6.3 If necessary, the fellow may have more than one mentor. It is also permissible to invite a consultant-mentor from another educational or research institution, including foreign institutions.

6.4 In case of refusal to mentor a fellow, the mentor must submit an appropriate application to the Scientific-Research and PhD department. This application will be considered by the Scientific Grant Committee.

6.5 In case of the desire to change the mentor, the fellow must submit a written, substantiated, and documented request to the Scientific-Research and PhD department.

6.6 Mentor:

6.6.1 participates in the development of the project implementation plan;

6.6.2 regularly meets with the fellow, provides consultations, and practical assistance in organizing and implementing the research

6.6.3 together with the fellow, the mentor develops the individual plan of research activities for the students and participates in monitoring of its implementation.

6.6.4 participates in the process of selecting the appropriate scientific journal for the publication of the findings.

6.6.5 participates in preparation of research article(s).

6.6.6 prepares scientific research projects together with the fellow for participation in national and international grant competitions.

#### **Article 7. Continuation, suspension, termination and closure of the project**

7.1 Continuation of the project is possible if the fellow has thoroughly fulfilled the obligations under the agreement and their research continuation plan has been positively evaluated by the commission. In this case, a one-time extension of the project for a period of 12 months is allowed.

7.2 Along with the above, an additional criterion for project continuation is the funding received by the fellow in national and/or international grant competitions in affiliation with TMA. In this case, the project may continue for the period determined by the grant agreement of the project financed in the national and/or international grant competition.

7.3 The project can be terminated if the funded individual does not fulfill the obligations under the contract or violates the project implementation conditions. Funding can also be terminated based on the reasoned



justification provided by the funded individual. This case will be considered by the scientific grant committee in accordance with the conditions defined in the agreement.

7.4 The Scientific Grant Committee is authorized to consider the change of a mentor based on an application submitted by the mentor to the Scientific-Research and PhD department. The mentor can be replaced by a person with appropriate competence, either based on the mentor's application or due to the non-implementation of the project or its specific tasks and activities.

7.5 The project will be considered completed once the tasks defined in the project timeframe activities, contractual obligations, and provided conditions are fulfilled, and the funded individual submits the final report.

#### **Article 8. Conflict of interest**

The general principles of conflict of interest apply to the procedures for evaluating applications and monitoring projects submitted within the framework of the “Research Fellowship” program.

#### **Article 9. Procedures for appealing the results**

9.1 The applicant has the right to appeal the results of the application evaluation to the Rector's Council.

9.2 The fellow has the right to appeal to the Rector's Council the decision on the suspension/termination of the project made by the Scientific Grant Committee of TMA during the implementation of the project.

9.3 The applicant/grantee's complaint must be submitted in an official, written form.

9.4 The Rector's Council is authorized to consider the opinions of relevant officials, structural units, scientific grant and bioethics international committees, the funded/applicant, mentor, student(s), and/or other invited persons regarding the complaint and make an appropriate decision.

9.5 The decision of the Rector's Council will be published in the form of a decree, which can be appealed according to the norms specified by the legislation of Georgia.

#### **Article 10. Final provisions**

10.1 This rule enters into force upon its approval by the Rector's Council of TMA.

10.2 Amendments to this rule are made through their acceptance.

10.3 This rule shall be deemed invalid upon the approval of a new rule.

Research Concept – Title

1) Actuality and innovation of the research concept  
*recommended number of words – 600*

2) Scientific hypothesis  
*recommended number of words – 50*

3) Importance and practical value of proposed research  
*recommended number of words – 600*

Project realization – Interim report

Title:

Research fellow:

Mentor:

Research fellowship duration (in months):

Goals and objectives of the research fellowship:

Activities and obtained results specific to the reporting period:

*Recommended length – 200 words*

## Project realization – Final report

Title:

Research fellow:

Mentor:

Research fellowship duration (in months):

Goals and objectives of the research fellowship:

Performed activities and obtained results:

*Recommended length – 200 words*

Scientific/practical importance of research fellowship (SWOT analysis):

*Recommended length – 400 words*

Self-evaluation – how important was the project for carrier development of a research fellow

*Recommended length – 200 words*

The perspectives of project development

*Recommended length – 200 words*

Student's motivation letter

1) Personal information – please present yourself

2) Please identify the project of your interest

3) Please explain why the project is interesting for you

*Recommended length – 100 words*

4) Please prove in an argumentative style that you have enough competence for participation in the project

*Recommended length – 100 words*

5) Please present the plan of your activities that will be performed within the project

*Recommended length – 100 words*

