



Guidelines for Applications of HMZ Flagship Projects

January 2020

THE HMZ FLAGSHIP GRANT SYSTEM

HMZ Flagship Projects are large interdisciplinary projects of high impact and visibility for the medical hub Zurich involving a consortium of several strongly interacting research groups aiming at a common goal. HMZ Flagship Grants are intended to promote innovative interdisciplinary research projects with a clear and coherent vision to solve problems of high medical relevance. Grant applications that involve novel combinations of disciplines at the interface of engineering, natural sciences and clinical application with the potential for break-through novel medical diagnosis or treatment are particularly welcome. Special attention will be paid to the value of collaboration between institutions as well as between disciplines.

Kick-start financing with up to 1 Mio. CHF per project will come from HMZ funds provided by the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich. One HMZ Flagship Project will be supported per year selected through a competitive process.

HMZ Flagship Grants are intended to kick-start projects with high impact and visibility. Participating groups are expected to contribute own resources to match HMZ funding (at least 1:1). The label as HMZ Flagship Project shall promote and facilitate access to other (competitive) financial sources. Existing or planned efforts for the acquisition of additional funding should be described in the grant application.

FUNDING RULES

Who can apply for a HMZ Flagship Grant

One or two Principal Investigators (PIs) acting as project chair or co-chairs and several co-applicants leading the sub-projects and forming a consortium may submit a HMZ Flagship Grant application.

As a general rule, the PIs must have a professorship at the University of Zurich or ETH Zurich and shall have an assured employment for at least the first project period of 3 years in case of assistant professors. HMZ Flagship Projects must be interdisciplinary and translational. Research groups from at least two, preferably three, of the partner institutions of HMZ and covering several disciplines shall be involved. In general, the co-applicants will also be employees of one of the partner institutions of HMZ.

What is acceptable for funding through a HMZ Flagship Grant

HMZ Flagship Projects involve several research groups involved in sub-projects closely working together towards a common vision. The HMZ Flagship Grants are intended to benefit the overall HMZ Flagship Project by supporting some key positions to kick-start the project. Therefore, funding shall not be concentrated to one single sub-project, but shall be used to (partially) finance at least three different sub-projects. The scientists funded are typically PhD or postdoctoral fellows at ETH Zurich and the University of Zurich (standard salaries of the employing institution are applicable). In case of PhD fellows, the supervisors must guarantee their ordinary employment for the whole period of their PhD studies. If explicitly required for the project, costs for materials, consumables, animal trials or clinical trials may also be included in a HMZ Flagship Grant application. The maximum funding level for a HMZ Flagship Project

is CHF 1 Mio. It is expected that all research groups involved in the project also contribute their own resources, matching HMZ funding.

Funding can only be granted to professorships at the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich. Financial accounts must be administered at the University of Zurich or ETH Zurich. Intellectual property and full publication rights belong to the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich, respectively.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Deadlines and formal requirements for applications

There is one HMZ Flagship Grant submission deadline per year on **May 1**.

Applications should be submitted by email in English and in a single PDF-file using the templates provided on the HMZ webpage.

Templates: <https://www.hochschulmedizin.uzh.ch/de/projekte.html>

Send your application to: info@hochschulmedizin.uzh.ch.

Primary information to be included in an application

The grant application should include:

- A concise summary with key details on the objectives of the proposed research, the methods to be employed, the interaction between disciplines, and the significance of the clinical question addressed (max. 400 words)
- A description of the thematic area and envisaged short term and long term objectives (the long term vision for the project shall go beyond the three-year funding period)
- A research plan with key details on the objectives and rationale of the proposed HMZ Flagship Project and each sub-project
- A specific explanation why the clinical question addressed can only be solved by virtue of the collaboration of at least two institutions as well as engineering, basic and clinical research groups, and cannot be addressed by single research groups
- The organization of the research consortium, a description of the input of all groups involved and the way of interaction
- A budget for the whole project over three years
- An explanation why this research is appropriate for consideration as a HMZ Flagship Project and a description of the significance of the project to HMZ and the medical hub Zurich
- A competitor landscape
- A one-page Curriculum Vitae (CV) of the PIs and co-applicants
- Any additional information that may help the assessment process

Technical abbreviations and jargon should be avoided or adequately explained. In particular, the summary should be written in a way that allows the educated layman to understand the objectives of the proposed research project, the methods to be employed, and the significance of the anticipated results.

The research plan shall include the scientific concept for the whole project and for each proposed sub-project. It shall include the methods to be employed, the goals, implementation plan and milestones, the expected outputs as well as the translational aspects. It is essential that the internal and external reviewers understand the potential and limitations of the proposed projects. Furthermore, the respective roles to be played by the PIs and co-applicants should be explicitly stated.

The research plan shall contain 10-20 pages (single line spacing, 10-point Arial font or equivalent).

The budget shall include (a) the overall needs for the whole project and for each group (b) the resources available by each group (own contribution), (c) contributions from other agencies (planned, requested or approved) and (d) the detailed assignment of the HMZ Grant (personnel, material costs etc).

The one-page CV shall include a specific section on the qualification, motivation and contribution to the project including the individual commitment as percentage of working time, as well as a list of not more than five publications relevant for the project.

Additional documents that must accompany an application

- A list of at least five suggested external reviewers (no employees of the University of Zurich or ETH Zurich) who should be independent of the PIs, co-applicants, and any person who may receive funding as a result of the grant application.
- Applicants may provide a list of researchers whom they consider to be inappropriate external reviewers. Such a list must, however, state the reasons for excluding the potential external reviewers.
- Declaration of parallel grant applications for the same project or substantial parts of it.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

The proposals are formally checked by the HMZ Managing Office and submitted to the HMZ Scientific Committee which will evaluate and rank the applications.

Evaluation criteria

The decision of funding is based on a quality-based evaluation process specifically taking into account the following criteria:

- Is the proposed project state-of-the-art and does it show potential for scientific excellence as well as strong interdisciplinary interactions?
- What is the short term and long term (clinical) impact of the project?
- What is the value for HMZ and for the medical hub Zurich (high visibility, societal relevance, impact)?
- Is there a strong commitment from a large number of research groups from different institutions and disciplines?
- What is the relevant experience of the applicants in the research field of the proposed project?
- How appropriate is the combination of disciplines and what is the scientific added value with respect to the individual contributions from the partners?
- How well conceived and organized is the proposed collaboration and consortium?
- Does the project have a reasonable chance of success and what difficulties can be expected?
- What is the competitive position of the HMZ project?

Oral presentations

Oral presentations of the project ideas based on a preliminary selection by the HMZ Scientific Committee will take place on invitation.

External Review

The HMZ Scientific Committee will submit up to three top-rated proposals to external reviewers.

Decision

The HMZ Scientific Committee will submit the top-rated proposals including the rationale for the selection and the external review to the HMZ Steering Board. For projects that are not recommended for a HMZ Flagship Grant, the HMZ Scientific Committee will provide a written statement for the attention of the applicants.

The HMZ Board will finally decide on one HMZ Flagship Project to be supported. Notification of decisions will normally be sent to the PIs within five months of the submission deadline. Projects can start immediately after formal approval.

In case of a rejection for formal reasons, notification of the decision will usually be given within one month of the respective submission deadline.