



competition commission
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COMPETITION COMMISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA

MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAMME

REQUEST FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS

2023/24 FUNDING CYCLE

In 2021, the Competition Commission South Africa (“Commission”) launched its Multidisciplinary Research Grant Programme (“MRGP”) aimed at promoting multidisciplinary research at South African tertiary education and research institutions that can inform and enhance competition law enforcement in the country. To date, the Commission has awarded research grants amounting to R925 000 to 11 recipients.

The Commission is pleased to present the second instalment of the MRGP and invites interested researchers and academics to submit research proposals in line with the themes identified further below.

Competition law and enforcement in South Africa uniquely has a broader mandate than simply maintaining and promoting competition in the economy to the benefit of consumers alone. The mandate has always incorporated the broader public interest of promoting a more inclusive economy, especially for SMEs and historically disadvantaged persons, as well as the economic development more generally. As a constitutional democracy, competition law and enforcement must also serve to protect and promote the fundamental human rights enshrined in our Constitution. Increasingly, competition law enforcement needs to navigate through new challenges such as the rise of global technology companies, the role of data privacy and sharing, algorithm-based pricing, continental integration imperatives and national strategic interests.

The broad mandate and new challenges to competition law enforcement not only demands a far stronger research community in South Africa to debate and inform appropriate enforcement, but it

also demands a far more multidisciplinary approach which benefits from the technical expertise and insights from fields other than competition economics and law. In launching the MRGP, the Commission hopes to not only stimulate multidisciplinary research on substantive issues facing competition law enforcement in this country, but also to develop a new generation of academics that will continue to support research in this field in future. For this reason, the MRGP will give special consideration to research teams that are multidisciplinary, and which include junior and early-career researchers.

Request for Proposals

The Commission invites proposals from researchers for high quality and substantive multidisciplinary research relevant to competition law enforcement that may contribute to informing and improving enforcement in South Africa. Proposals may align with some of the themes identified below but are not limited to those themes only.

Proposals are welcome from doctoral students¹, post-doctoral researchers, academics based in South African tertiary institutions and experienced researchers in research institutions. Proposals may be from individuals or groups of researchers based in South Africa.

Successful proposals will be issued with research agreements by the Commission. A total research grant in the range of R50,000 to R150,000 will be available for successful proposals depending on the assessment of the proposal, the qualifications of the researcher or research team, and the inclusion of other disciplines and/or junior / entry-level researchers. The payment will be made upon delivery of the final research paper and advances may be granted where there are costs to undertake aspects of the research. The Commission will also cover any expenses to attend work-in-progress workshops and any dissemination events.

Researchers that require access to the Commission's merger database or investigation records will be subject to certain restrictions to protect confidentiality and may be required to sign non-disclosure agreements with the Commission and/or third parties.

Potential themes

¹ Doctoral students will require a letter of support from their doctoral supervisor.

The Commission is interested in any research proposals that will inform and improve competition law enforcement. The list of potential themes below is designed purely to stimulate ideas amongst the research community and in no way limits the topics for proposals. These are broad themes and proposals may be focused on far more specific topics within these themes.

- How the protection of different constitutional rights might inform specific enforcement approaches.
- Methodological and analytical approaches in the evaluation of public interest issues, including areas introduced by the new amendments.
- The incorporation of gender or environmental issues in public interest
- Remedial design and efficacy, including an impact assessment of interventions.
- Enforcement approaches designed to foster growth and development.
- Insights into SA consumer behaviour (taking into account spatial and income distributional dimensions, among others) and how this shapes actual competition.
- Developments in digital markets and the implications for consumer behaviour in South Africa
- Competition dynamics in township and rural economies
- Merger implications for small buyers or small suppliers
- Development of markets for data whilst balancing privacy and security
- Algorithmic pricing within South Africa, including benefits and harms of personal pricing using big data.
- Cartel detection techniques and tools relevant to South Africa
- Criminalisation, fines and deterrent effects
- Addressing competition issues in regulated sectors, and the use of regulation to address competition issues
- Legal and liability standards for competition enforcement
- Design and building of enforcement institutions

Proposal Adjudication

The evaluation process and criteria for acceptance of research proposals will be conducted by an Academic Reference Group (ARG) and an internal Commission Research Grant Committee (RGC). The primary role of the ARG will be to ensure that the research proposals submitted meet a minimum standard for technical merit for the proposal, capacity building and technical capabilities of the research team. The combination of these factors will determine whether a proposal meets the minimum score required for acceptance. The primary role of the internal RGC will be to assess enforcement relevance which is an additional factor considered for acceptance. The ARG will comprise of senior members of the academic community and senior practitioners in the field, including former members of the Commission, Competition Tribunal and/or Competition Appeal Court. The ARG will make recommendations of suitable research proposals to the RGC for collective decision-making on acceptance and the grant size. The total number of grants awarded is subject to a budget cap.

Timelines

31 March 2023	Submission of research proposals
28 April 2023	Final adjudication of research proposals and grants
31 May 2023	Completion of research agreements
31 July 2023	First draft of research paper for presentation and review
29 September 2023	Submission of final research paper
October/November 2023	Presentation of selected papers at the Competition Commission and Tribunal Annual Conference

Proposal format

The proposal should include the following aspects:

- The name and CV of the lead researcher as well as the members of the research team, including contact details;
- A summary of the main research question, methodology, data and expected contribution to competition law enforcement in South Africa;

- A technical proposal with more details on the methodology and data.

Any questions can be sent to Arthur Mahuma (mrgp@compcom.co.za) and final submissions of the research proposals should be sent to Arthur Mahuma by the due date.

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