

**Meaning of Signatures:
Electronic Approvals for Research Funding**

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Overview

Western University is committed to the responsible stewardship and effective administration of funding that supports scholarly, research and research-related activity. The University's research mission is collectively advanced by Principal Investigators, departments, faculties, schools, research institutes, and administrative units. The purpose of this document is to define the roles and accountabilities associated with the submission and approval of research Applications or Contracts through Western's research grants management system (ROLA).

Definitions

The following terms have the following meanings in this guidance policy:

1. **Account Holder** means the individual under whose name or title the research Project is held and who accepts financial responsibility for the research Project. The Account Holder is most often the Principal Investigator, however, there are instances where a Chair, Dean or other administrative leader is the Account Holder.
2. **Administering Unit** means the department or unit which holds the Account Holder's academic appointment and accepts administrative and financial responsibility for the research Project.
3. **Application** means an official request for research funding to a Sponsor. Applications may seek internal or external funding and can be in response to an open research funding opportunity or a private one-time invitation.
4. **Contract** means any Commercial Contract, Research Contract or Service Contract as defined in Western MAPP 7.8 – [Signing Authorities for Research Documents](#) that has funding associated with said contract to support research activities.
5. **Principal Investigator (PI)** means the individual with a research-eligible appointment who has primary responsibility for carrying out the intellectual direction, administrative oversight and leadership of a research Project.
6. **Project** means sponsored research undertaking or activity performed by a PI.
7. **ROLA** is the acronym for *Research On-Line Administration* which is Western's corporate grants management system.
8. A **ROLA Proposal** is an internal electronic record created by a PI to seek institutional approvals through the ROLA system for a research funding Application or Contract.
9. **Sponsor** means the source that is providing funding for the research Project. This can be an internal funding source or an external source, not limited to a government agency, foundation, society, industry or corporation.

Meaning of Signatures: Roles and Responsibilities

When an Application or Contract for research funding is submitted to a Sponsor by a PI, the University assumes a commitment to execute any resulting sponsored Project in good faith. This includes stewardship of the funds provided by the Sponsor and adherence to all applicable terms and conditions. To support this commitment, the University has established a unified framework that delineates the roles and responsibilities of Principal Investigators, Administering Units, Faculties and the University throughout the lifecycle of the Project.

Provision of an electronic signature in the ROLA system and thereby approval, commits each signatory to the responsibilities outlined below.

Principal Investigator (PI) and/or Account Holder

The Principal Investigator is responsible for the development of an Application or scope of work for a Contract to secure funding for a proposed research Project. By submitting a ROLA Proposal, the electronic signature of the PI affirms the following:

- a. The information in the ROLA Proposal and Application/Contract is complete and accurate to the best of their knowledge.
- b. The research team members listed in the ROLA Proposal and Application/Contract have agreed to be included as part of the Project.
- c. The PI will comply with all University policies, procedures, guidelines and requirements, including but not limited to:
 - Provide a copy of the final Application to the Office of Research Services to accompany the submission of a complete and accurate ROLA Proposal.
 - Ensure appropriate indirect costs are included as part of the Application budget per MAPP 7.7 – [Overhead on Contract Research](#).
 - Secure sufficient space, time and/or resources to conduct the research proposed. If additional space, time and/or resources are required, the PI will seek approval from the Administering Unit and/or from other University authorities as appropriate. This includes and is not limited to:
 - i. any new or increased animal work, including new animal space needs
 - ii. any new or increased laboratory/research space
 - iii. teaching release/course buyout.
- d. The PI will follow all requirements as set out in MAPP 7.0: [Responsible Conduct of Research](#) and the [Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research](#): including the requirement of meeting all regulations regarding the use of humans, animals and/or biohazardous materials.
- e. The PI will lead the intellectual direction of the proposed research and research-related activities in accordance with the Sponsor requirements/Contract terms and is responsible for submitting all technical, scientific and/or progress reports by the prescribed deadlines.

- f. The PI will promptly notify the Office of Research Services of:
- Any changes or anticipated changes to the scope of research that will result in new/incremental certification requirements on the funded Project.
 - Any changes to their employment or appointment status for the duration of the funded Project.
 - Any leaves that will impact the supervision and oversight of the funded Project.
 - Any changes to the Project team members (co-applicants) or Project partners (e.g., partners providing funds), as Sponsor notification may be required.
 - Any conflicts of interest (actual or perceived).

Responsibilities of the Account Holder

When the PI and the Account Holder are the same individual, all responsibilities below will also apply to that individual. When they are different, the following responsibilities are applicable to the Account Holder.

- a. The Account Holder understands and agrees to abide by the spending restrictions/requirements as outlined in the Sponsor's guidelines or the Contract, and to ensure that funds are used solely for their designated purposes.
- b. The Account Holder will ensure that Project expenditures comply with University policies and procedures, and applicable government regulations, including but not limited to those governing:
- [Procurement of Materials & Services](#) (MAPP 2.8)
 - [Delegation of Signing Authority for Research Project Expenditures](#) (DoSA)
 - [Travel & Expense Reimbursement](#) (MAPP 2.16)
 - [Over-expenditure of Research Accounts](#) (MAPP 7.11)
 - [Controlled goods and import/export controls](#)
 - [Controlled drugs and substances](#)
 - [Contract security](#)
 - Clinical trials
 - [Research Security](#)
- c. The Account Holder will authorize sub-grants to collaborating institutions as needed, where permitted by the Sponsor. The authorization will include the collaborator's contact information, statement of work and related budget.
- d. The Account Holder will monitor and review financial transactions associated with the Project on a regular basis, and report discrepancies to the department administrator(s).
- e. Review and sign financial reports prepared by Research Finance, for submission to the Sponsor.

Administering Unit: Chair / Director

Chairs/Department Heads (or equivalent) with oversight of the Administering Unit are responsible for reviewing and taking timely action on ROLA Proposals submitted by members of their department. This includes either approving the submission or returning it to the PI for revision. Where there is no departmental administering unit, the accountabilities roll up to the faculty.

The signature/electronic approval of the Chair/Department Head on a ROLA Proposal affirms the following:

- a. That they have reviewed the proposed Project, and that the PI has sufficient space, time and resources as consistent with their faculty appointment. In addition, the Administering Unit is committed to providing, or has received written confirmation of commitment, from the appropriate University authority to provide additional resources that have been specifically communicated to the Administering Unit by the PI to conduct the proposed research Project. This includes but is not limited to:
 - confirmation of protected time for research (if required by Sponsor)
 - matching funds for the Project (if required by Sponsor).
- b. The Administering Unit acknowledges the research activity described in the Application/Contract is in line with the Administering Unit's research objectives in consideration of the rights accorded through academic freedom and the [Collective Agreement Between The University of Western Ontario and The University of Western Ontario Faculty Association \(UWOFA\)](#).
- c. The Administering Unit is committed to the principle of recovering the full costs incurred in support of research per MAPP 7.7: [Overhead on Contract Research](#).
- d. Any internal Administering Unit requirements have been met.

The Administering Unit will also:

- Provide the necessary support, including administrative, financial and space resources, as outlined in the Application/Contract and ROLA Proposal, and promote compliance with government regulations, University policies/procedures, and Sponsor guidelines.
- Address matters as brought forward by Research Finance, Human Resources and Western Research with regard to the research Project.
- Accept resource and financial commitments entailed by the activity, including over-expenditures as per MAPP 7.11: [Over-expenditure of Research Accounts](#).
- Work with all relevant parties to develop, implement and monitor conflict of interest management plans for any actual or perceived conflicts of interest identified before or during the course of a funded research Project, in accordance with MAPP 3.4: [Conflicts of Interest](#) and any applicable Sponsor requirements. In addition, they will promptly notify all relevant parties of any emerging conflicts of interest as soon as they arise.

Faculty Dean/Associate Dean of Research (ADR)

The Faculty as delegated to the Associate Dean of Research (ADR) or equivalent, is responsible for reviewing and taking timely action on ROLA Proposals submitted by members of their faculty. This includes either approving the submission or returning it to the PI for revision.

The signature/electronic approval of the faculty on a ROLA Proposal affirms the following:

- a. The PI holds an appropriate research-eligible academic appointment, for the work in the proposed Application/Contract, within their Administering Unit covering the period of the proposed Project at the time of application or will have a confirmed appointment before the Project is awarded.
- b. The Faculty, in coordination with the Administering Unit, will ensure that the Office of Research Services and the Sponsor are notified if there is a change in employment or appointment status of the PI.
- c. The Faculty is committed to the principle of recovering the full costs incurred in support of research per MAPP 7.11: [Overhead on Contract Research](#).
- d. Any internal faculty requirements have been met.

The Faculty will also:

- Provide the necessary support as outlined in the Application or Contract and promote adherence to University, government and Sponsor policies, procedures and guidelines.
- Address matters as brought forward by Research Finance, Human Resources and Western Research with regards to the research Project.
- Along with the Administering Unit, accept resource and financial commitments entailed by the activity, including over-expenditures as per MAPP 7.11: [Over-expenditure of Research Accounts](#).

Institutional Authorized Signing Authority

The signature / electronic approval of an Authorized Signing Authority obtained through the Office of Research Services affirms on behalf of the University that:

- a. The PI is affiliated with the University and is eligible to apply for and hold research funding at the University per institutional and Sponsor policies.
- b. The PI and the proposed Application/Contract meet the eligibility requirements of the Sponsor and has received the appropriate level of administrative review by the University to ensure compliance with Sponsor and institutional requirements.
- c. The University has obtained the necessary approvals from other institutions involved in the Application/Contract, if applicable.
- d. If the Application/Contract is accepted by the Sponsor, the University is able and willing to administer the funds in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Sponsor.
- e. Mechanisms are available to ensure the required oversight is in place for research activities in adherence to Sponsor, government and University policies, procedures and guidelines.
- f. If a PI's employment status with the University changes within the term of the Project, or material changes are required to the Project team or funding partner participation, the Office of Research Services will facilitate notification to the Sponsor in conjunction with the Administering Unit and Faculty Dean/ADR.