The Olympic Studies Centre

Advanced Olympic Research Grant Programme

Objectives, rules and guidelines

2027/2029 Award

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1. Objectives

The main objectives of the Olympic Studies Centre (OSC)'s grant programme are to promote advanced humanities or social sciences research by experienced researchers in priority fields of research identified by the IOC for each edition and to foster the collaboration between the academic community and the IOC.

For the 2027/2029 edition, the priority fields of research are:

ATHLETES

1. Olympic athletes' awareness of and readiness for career transition and livelihood development in developing countries

The proposals should address one or more of the following elements:

- Levels of awareness of the importance of preparing for career transition and level of readiness for life after sport;
- Actions taken to prepare for transition and support received from the entourage before, during and after retirement;
- Data collection on the average duration of the transition period, and the athlete's status, livelihood and financial situation;
- Recommendations to increase awareness and readiness, bridge gaps and enhance long-term employability and livelihood outcomes.

OLYMPIC GAMES

2. The future Olympic Games proposition: how people experience, engage with and participate in the Games, and how value is created for athletes, fans, partners and other stakeholders

The proposals should address one or more of the following elements:

- How changing patterns of sport and entertainment consumption reshape the ways in which the Games create value for athletes, fans, hosts, the Olympic Movement, Media Rights-Holders, Commercial Partners and others;
- Changing audience expectations and forms of participation;
- The role of athletes in creating connection, engagement and value;
- Interaction between physical, broadcast and digital experiences, content creation and sharing;
- How celebration and shared experiences contribute to the value and relevance of the Olympic Games proposition;
- How different approaches to access, exclusivity and participation affect the value of the Olympic ecosystem;
- How innovative competition formats, and sport events could contribute to value creation for the Olympic Games and other Olympic properties;
- Comparative research into other major sports, entertainment properties and participatory platforms to identify emerging models of value creation.

3. Environmental sustainability of the Olympic Games

The proposals should address one or more of the following elements:

- Embedding circularity in Games planning;
- Minimising the water footprint of the Games;
- Nature protection/restoration through the Games;
- Mitigation and adaptation strategies for the Games in response to climate change;
- The impact of spectators' and Olympic Movement's travel on the environmental impact of the Olympic Games,
- Athlete advocacy on environmental topics;
- Leveraging partnerships for sustainability;
- Tourism displacement and the risk of additional pressure on the host territory related to the organisation of the Olympic Games (in comparison to non-Olympic years);
- Carbon strategies and responsibilities for Olympic Games stakeholders;
- Environmental legacy of the Games.

OLYMPIC MOVEMENT

4. Gambling incidence among elite athletes in the Olympic Movement

The proposals should address one or more of the following elements:

- Prevalence of gambling and betting among elite athletes, including Olympic Games participants;
- Betting behaviours and awareness of betting regulations;
- Understanding of gambling-related risks, addiction and harm;
- Academic and grey literature review, and athlete surveys/consultations leading to an analysis and identification of main trends and knowledge gaps.

5. Perception of corruption in sport and competition manipulation – focus on reporting

The proposals should address one or more of the following elements:

- Literature review of corruption and the prevention of competition manipulation;
- Empirical study on perceived levels of corruption in sport, including competition manipulation;
- Barriers to reporting and the effectiveness of existing reporting mechanisms.

OLYMPIC SOCIAL IMPACT

6. Refugee athletes, sport and humanitarian action

The proposals should address one or more of the following elements:

- Development of policies and advocacy content on the practice of sport in the context of forced displacement and crisis;
- Research related to refugee athlete support and development;
- Participatory research methods drawing on lived experience and the voice of affected populations;
- Research led by researchers with lived experience of displacement, strengthening the academic response to gaps around sport in humanitarian contexts;
- Uptake of sport in crisis areas, leading to practical tools for practitioners.

7. Expanding and sustaining participation and retention in sport

Research on the factors that enable people to move from access or referral to sport through to sustained and long-term participation, including the factors that contribute to drop-out, discontinuation or irregular participation, and how sustained participation contributes to improved health and well-being, social and/or economic outcomes.

The proposals should address one or more of the following elements:

- Examine how broader societal changes are influencing participation and retention in sport, including social fragmentation, rapid digitalisation and AI advances, economic inequality, cost-of-living and economic pressures, climate change, and conflict and displacement;
- Examine barriers, attribution and enabling factors across the participation journey, from initial access/referral through to sustained participation;
- Identify issues and factors contributing to drop-out from sport, including if and how issues and factors vary among young people and adults;
- Compare outcomes between sustained participation and non-participation or short-term participation groups;
- Consider how approaches to sustaining sports participation and supporting retention can be adapted across different contexts.

Special attention will be paid to applications focusing specifically on the impact on women and girls, refugees and other underserved communities. We welcome applications addressing evidence gaps and understudied populations within these groups.

8. Using evidence to inform investment, policy and decision-making in sport-based programmes

Research on the drivers, incentives and barriers shaping investment decisions for sport-based programmes, policies and interventions, including the allocation, reallocation and expansion of public, private and philanthropic funding. Particular attention should be given to sport's contribution to health and well-being, education, inclusion and broader social outcomes. The research should be grounded in the changing funding landscape, marked by fiscal pressures, increased competition for resources and declining Official Development Assistance (ODA). It should also examine how expectations around evidence, impact, cost-effectiveness and value for money influence investment decisions, and the implications for the future positioning and financing of sport.

The proposals should address one or more of the following elements:

- Examination of the drivers, incentives and barriers that influence the extent to which sport is viewed as an investable development approach.
- Direct engagement with primary sources of investment and decision-makers such as development financing institutions, the private sector, foundations, philanthropies and public authorities to examine the motivations, incentives, constraints and decision-making processes that influence whether, where and to what extent they invest or expand investment in sport.
- Examination of how funding mechanisms, governance arrangements, policy environments, accountability requirements and competing development priorities influence investment decisions related to sport.

- Exploration of the factors that enable or constrain the influence of evidence on resource allocation decisions, including how evidence interacts with other considerations and priorities.

9. Understanding the transfer of skills, competencies and values from sport to social inclusion and economic opportunity

Research on how, and under what conditions, the skills, competencies and values developed through sport and Olympic values-based education can contribute to more inclusive attitudes, behaviours, relationships and opportunities, within and beyond sport, and/or support wider education, employment and livelihoods.

The proposals should address one or more of the following elements:

- Examination of which skills, competencies and values are developed through sport and Olympic values-based education, how they translate into long term shifts in attitudes and behaviours that advance inclusion, and under what conditions;
- Relationships between sport and Olympic values-based life skill programmes and emerging opportunities for employment and livelihoods in the sport value chain;
- Exploration of how programme design and implementation can strengthen the transfer of skills, competencies and values beyond sport and Olympic values-based education;
- Consideration of how outcomes in education, employment and livelihoods through sport and Olympic values-based education can be measured and evidenced.

Special attention will be paid to applications focusing specifically on the impact on women and girls, refugees and other underserved communities, including understudied populations within these groups.

10. Culturally grounded athlete, coach and sports official development

The proposals should address one or more of the following elements:

- How local cultures, oral traditions and indigenous knowledge can inform athlete, coach and sports official development.
- Approaches that combine community-based knowledge with contemporary education, coaching and high-performance systems.
- Comparative analysis of effective practices across cultural, geographical and sporting contexts.
- Practical recommendations for culturally relevant development pathways, especially in Oceania, alongside other regional or comparative contexts.

11. Localising Olympic Education: The role of academia in designing, implementing, adapting and measuring Olympic education programmes

The proposals should address one or more of the following elements:

- Interpretation, adaptation and integration of Olympic education across cultural, social and political contexts;
- Role of indigenous educational traditions, local sporting practices, cultural narratives and community values in delivering Olympic education;
- Development of frameworks for universities to support ministries of education, National Olympic Academies and NOCs in designing locally relevant programmes;

- Potential contributions by universities: regional research hubs, local case studies, regional programme adaptations, repositories of teaching resources and curriculum mapping.

2. Eligibility

All university professors and researchers who have completed their doctorate and who hold an open-ended appointment or an academic/research appointment/affiliation covering the period of the grant (from submission of the application to delivery of the final report) are eligible to apply (Appendix 1).

Applicants must submit a proposal directly linked to at least one of the priority fields of research listed above. Research projects will be accepted only if the applicants clearly demonstrate that the results will be relevant to the current situation of the priority field concerned.

Applications within a natural science focus (e.g. biomechanics, physiology, medicine, neurosciences, etc.) fall outside the scope of this programme.

Other eligibility criteria to be fulfilled are as follows:

- Applicants must be fluent in either English or French.
- Applicants may apply on an individual basis or as a team.
- Applicants with a Principal Investigator (PI) role may be involved in only one application.
- In the case of team applications:
    - one academic member of the group should be nominated as the PI and remain the main contact person for the OSC;
    - all research group members must fulfil all the eligibility criteria. However, in special circumstances, a maximum of one project member may be a representative of a sports organisation, government body or another non-academic institution if their contribution is essential to the project and is clearly justified;
    - interdisciplinary and intercultural team applications are encouraged.

These eligibility criteria will be strictly applied.

3. Application procedures and deadlines

The application process consists of two stages:

Stage 1: Submission of an Expression of Interest (EOI)
Deadline: Monday 11 January 2027 at 23.59 CET

- EOIs that are submitted after the deadline, are incomplete or do not comply with the programme's rules will be deemed ineligible. The OSC will send confirmation of acceptance via email at the latest two weeks after the submission deadline.
- The outcome of Stage 1 will be communicated to all applicants during the week commencing 1 March 2027.

Stage 2: Submission of a Full Application by shortlisted candidates following IOC evaluation
Deadline: Monday 12 April 2027 at 23.59 CEST

- Applications that are submitted after the deadline or are incomplete will not be accepted.
- Applicants participating in Stage 2 will be notified of the results in June 2027.

EOI, Full Applications and supporting documentation must be submitted in either English or French, the two official languages of the Olympic Movement.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to consult in advance the checklist of supporting documents required for both the EOI and the Full Application.

4. Grant awards

Successful applicants will receive a research grant of a maximum of USD 40,000 per project. The total amount to be awarded will be decided by the Grant Programme Selection Committee after full consideration of all elements of the application.

EXPENSES COVERED

Research expenses directly related and essential to the project as follows:

- Travel (economy class), living expenses and other expenses related to essential field research;
- Translation costs for essential research materials;
- Web hosting and content development;
- Software not provided by the university;
- Data collection (workshops and focus groups);
- Expert third-party services;
- Activities aiming to ensure that the final outcomes / recommendations of the research project are shared with the relevant Olympic Movement stakeholders.
- Other relevant research expenditure.

Research assistance and transcription costs will be funded when essential and properly justified. The applicants' time devoted to the project should be at least equal to or exceed that of the research assistant(s).

Expenses related to the dissemination of the applicant's research results within the academic world are accepted up to a maximum of 10 per cent of the total budget.

EXPENSES NOT COVERED

- Applicant's salary and/or fringe benefits, including insurance;
- Tuition and study fees;
- Institutional overheads or institutional support;
- Expenses incurred prior to the effective date of the grant;
- Purchase of technological material or hardware (laptop, camera, etc.).

The grant will be paid through the academic institution of the successful applicant (PI) with the following schedule: half when the Research Project Agreement has been signed, one-quarter after submission of the second progress report, and one-quarter on receipt and validation of the final research report.

5. Selection and notification

The Grant Programme Selection Committee is composed of academic experts who are internationally renowned for their involvement in Olympic studies and a representative of the OSC.

Other representatives of the IOC administration and a selection of Academic Peer Reviewers are also involved in the Assessment and Selection Process. Decisions are based on the quality of the application file, the significance of the proposed research to at least one of the priority fields of research, the relevance of the expected outcomes for the IOC's programmes and/or activities, the feasibility of the project and the candidate's/ candidates' ability to carry out the research satisfactorily.

Note that this is a competitive programme with a set amount of funds to be awarded for each edition and that the grants will be awarded at the discretion of the funding body.

Funded projects will start in early September 2027, following the signature of the agreement, and final research reports will be due by mid-June 2029.

6. Publications and undertakings

All grants are conditional upon signature of the "Research Project Agreement" ("Agreement") by the successful applicant (the "Researcher"), or the PI in the event of a team application, and their university. The Agreement describes the terms and conditions of the collaboration between the Researcher/PI, their university and the Olympic Studies Centre. The Researcher/PI, is requested to read the Agreement and inform their university about its terms before submitting an application. See here for the Agreement for individual applicants and here for the Agreement for team applications).

The Researcher/PI must schedule three meetings with the IOC administration involved in the project:

1. one at the beginning of the research, to ensure a common vision on the research to be conducted and share any relevant information;
2. one in the middle of the project, to review preliminary findings; and
3. a last one after submission of the final report, to comment on the outcomes.

For the Researcher/PI not requiring consultation of the OSC collections, the meetings will be organised online. For those planning to consult the OSC collections, it is highly recommended that they combine one of the meetings with the IOC staff and their visit to the OSC in a single trip to Lausanne.

The Researcher/PI will undertake to provide the OSC with the following documents (electronic version), in either English or French:

- Two progress reports every seven months after signature of the agreement, describing the project's development (2,000 words maximum) and a financial accounting report of the expenses incurred thus far.
- A final research report before mid-June 2029. The final report, which the OSC may use for publication on the Olympic World Library, will consist of three documents with the following content:
    1. First document (approx. 8,000 – 12,000 words):
        - An abstract (200 words maximum) and a list of key words;
        - An executive summary including a short description of the research topic and objectives, and highlighting the main findings, conclusions and, if appropriate, recommendations (approx. 1,200 – 2,000 words);
        - The report including the research topic and objectives; the methodology applied; and a detailed presentation of the findings, conclusions and, if appropriate, recommendations of the research project;
        - The annexes, including any additional information of interest for the project.

2. Second document:
   - An infographic summarising the objectives, methodology and findings of the research project.

3. Third document:
   - A final financial accounting report for all funds provided by the OSC. This last part must be sent in a separate document (template provided by the OSC).

The Researcher/PI is encouraged to publish/disseminate the research results within high quality academic outlets. They will also undertake to ensure that all subsequent publications or productions, using all or part of the results obtained under the auspices of the research grant, will appropriately acknowledge the IOC Olympic Studies Centre and the Advanced Olympic Research Grant Programme. In addition, they will share any such publications or productions with the OSC.

7. Guidelines concerning the use of artificial intelligence tools

The OSC acknowledges the increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in academic research and publications. While AI can significantly enhance research efficiency, innovation and impact, and reduce potential language considerations, the use of AI tools must be balanced with ethical considerations and academic transparency and integrity.

Based on the above, these guidelines provide a framework for the appropriate use of AI tools in research funded by the OSC, and aim to enable the opportunities that AI brings to academic research while ensuring that 1) the work remains the product of the academics' own intellectual endeavours and 2) there is a protection against potential risks.

All candidates and grant-holders must comply with the following guidelines:

1. Transparency and acknowledgement
   - AI assistance disclosure: Any use of AI tools, including for drafting, proofreading, summarising or data analysis, must be explicitly acknowledged in the candidate's applications and/or all research reports.
   - Authorship integrity: AI-generated content should not replace the original thought and critical analysis expected from applicants and grant-holders. AI should be a tool for assistance, not a primary source.

2. Data protection and privacy
   - Sensitive information: AI tools must not be used by to process sensitive, confidential or proprietary data.
   - Compliance with Data Laws: Ensure compliance with all relevant ethics, data protection and privacy laws and regulations, particularly when handling personal data.

3. Intellectual property (IP) and originality
   - Respect for IP rights: Use AI responsibly by not infringing on intellectual property rights. This includes avoiding the generation of content that mimics proprietary works.
   - Plagiarism prevention: Applicants and grant-holders are responsible for the originality and integrity of their work. Grant-holders are responsible for verifying via an appropriate plagiarism online tool that AI-generated content included in the final report does not result in plagiarism.

4. Ethical use and bias awareness
   - Ethical considerations: Be aware of and address any ethical implications and/or national ethics requirements of using AI in research.
   - Bias and accuracy: Recognise that AI tools may have inherent biases or accuracy limitations. Applicants and grant-holders should critically evaluate and corroborate AI-generated information with other relevant sources.

8. Additional information

SELECTION COMMITTEE

For the 2025/2027 Advanced Olympic Research Grant Programme, the IOC Olympic Studies Centre (OSC) accepted 76 applications and awarded 6 grants. The Selection Committee, responsible for recommending to the OSC which projects should be awarded a grant, was composed of the following experts:

- Mahfoud AMARA (Qatar University, Qatar)
- Dikaia CHATZIEFSTATHIOU (Canterbury Christ Church University, Great Britain)
- Angela SCHNEIDER (Western University, Canada)
- Tracy TAYLOR (RMIT University, Australia)
- Paul WYLLEMAN (Vrije Universiteit, Belgium)

FULL LIST OF AWARDED RESEARCH PROJECTS

The full list of research projects funded by the IOC Olympic Studies Centre since the creation of its grant programmes in 1999 is available here. The list is organised by theme, with links to the full text versions online when available.

SECRETARIAT

For any additional information concerning the Advanced Olympic Research Grant Programme, please contact the OSC via email or phone (+41 21 621 6611).

To find out more about the activities and collections of the IOC Olympic Studies Centre, please consult our website.