



competition commission
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COMPETITION COMMISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA

MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH GRANT PROGRAMME 2026

Towards a growing and diverse community of competition experts

CALL FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS

Maximum grant amount:

R150 000

Thematic areas

Constitutional rights and competition enforcement approaches	Algorithmic pricing in South Africa
Evaluation approaches for public interest issues in competition law	Cartel detection techniques and tools relevant to South Africa
Gender, the environment, and SDGs as public interest issues in competition law	Criminalisation, fines and deterrent effects of competition law
The design and efficacy of remedies in competition law	Competition issues in regulated sectors
Competition enforcement approaches to foster growth and development	Competition issues in the Commission's priority sectors ¹
Consumer behaviour in South Africa	Legal and liability standards for competition enforcement
Competition dynamics in township and rural economies	Enforcement of the amendments to Competition Act
Merger implications for small buyers or small suppliers	Institutional design for competition enforcement
Balancing personal data markets with privacy rights and security	

Deadline for submission: 31 January 2026

Requirements

- Open to doctoral students, post-doctoral researchers, academics based in South African tertiary institutions, and experienced researchers in research institutions.
- Researchers should not submit more than one proposal per year either as a lead researcher or as part of a research team.
- Researchers are required to disclose if they have funding from other institutions for the same research and motivate the need for additional funding.
- Researchers must be able to source their own data as the program is not able to share the Commission's data. Obtaining this data by prior arrangement is acceptable.

¹ Food and agro-processing; healthcare; intermediate industrial inputs; construction and infrastructure; banking and financial services; banking and financial services; information and communication technology; and the energy sector



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The Competition Commission South Africa (“Commission”) launched its Multidisciplinary Research Grant Programme (“MRGP”) to promote multidisciplinary research at South African tertiary institutions that can inform and enhance competition law enforcement in the country. The Commission is pleased to present the fourth instalment of the MRGP and invites interested researchers and academics to submit research proposals relevant to competition law enforcement.

Competition law 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, sustainability (economic, social and environmental) 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 multi-disciplinary, which include junior and early-career researchers, in particular historically disadvantaged persons, and which are from higher education institutions where competition law and economics is less

developed in the research and teaching curriculum. The MRGP will also give special consideration to research teams that are diversified in terms of gender and race.

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 but are not limited to those themes only.

Who can apply?

Proposals are welcome from doctoral students², post-doctoral researchers, academics based in South African tertiary institutions, and experienced researchers in research institutions. Proposals must be from individuals or groups of researchers based in South Africa.

Value and disbursement

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 researchers. Researchers are also requested to provide a detailed breakdown of the anticipated research costs. Only direct research costs will be considered in determining the value of the grant. The financial disbursements will be structured as follows:

- An initial payment of 40% of the grant amount upon approval of the research proposal;
- A further payment of 30% of the grant amount upon submission of the draft research paper;
and
- A final payment of 30% of the grant amount upon submission of the final research paper.

Conditions

Researchers should not submit more than one proposal either as a lead researcher or as part of a research team. Researchers are required to disclose if they have funding from other

² Doctoral students will require a letter of support from their doctoral supervisor.

institutions for the same research and motivate for the need for additional funding. Researchers must be able to source their own data as the Commission is not able to share any data.

Research themes

The Commission is interested in any research proposals that will inform and improve competition law enforcement in South Africa. The list of potential themes below is designed purely to stimulate ideas - proposals may be focused on far more specific topics within these themes:

1. **Constitutional rights and competition enforcement approaches:** how should the Commission amend competition law enforcement approaches to protect and promote different constitutional rights?
2. **Evaluation approaches for public interest issues in competition law:** methodological and analytical approaches for identifying, assessing, and addressing public interest issues in competition law enforcement.
3. **Gender, the environment, and sustainable development goals in general as public interest issues in competition law:** how should the Commission incorporate and assess harm to societal progress when enforcing competition law?
4. **The design and efficacy of remedies in competition law:** methodological and analytical approaches to designing remedies and assessing their impact.
5. **Competition enforcement approaches to foster growth and development:** the relationship between the enforcement of competition law and growth and development, and the approaches the Commission should adopt to foster growth and development.
6. **Consumer behaviour in South Africa:** insights into actual customer consumption and switching behaviour in different markets in South Africa to understand consumer demand in these markets.
7. **Competition dynamics in township and rural economies:** insights into the structure of these economies, the behaviour of businesses that operate within them, and the competition outcomes that arise.

8. **Merger implications for small buyers or small suppliers:** analyses of the impact of increases in market power through mergers on small independent buyers, that procure the goods/services of the merged entity, and independent suppliers that supply inputs to the merged entity.
9. **Balancing personal data markets with privacy rights and security:** insights into the economic, technical, social, and ethical issues associated with personal data markets, focusing on the privacy and security challenges they raise.
10. **Algorithmic pricing within South Africa:** insights into the prevalence of algorithmic pricing in South Africa, and analytical and methodological approaches to identify and assess the welfare and public interest effects of algorithmic pricing in South Africa.
11. **Cartel detection techniques and tools relevant to South Africa:** technological or analytical enforcement approaches that can effectively detect cartels in South Africa.
12. **Criminalisation, fines and deterrent effects of competition law:** assessments of the effectiveness of South Africa's punitive measures against infringements to the Competition Act.
13. **Competition issues in regulated sectors:** insights into the complementary interrelationship between regulation and competition enforcement and how should the Commission address competition issues in regulated sectors, particularly in cases where regulations may have inadvertently immunised anticompetitive conduct from competition policy?
14. **Competition issues in the Commission's priority sectors:** insights and proactive solutions to the competition issues that arise in the following 7 sectors - food and agro-processing, healthcare, intermediate industrial inputs, construction and infrastructure, banking and financial services, information and communication technology and energy.

15. **Legal and liability standards for competition enforcement:** analysis of assessment procedures or decision rules in determining proof of liability and how these may vary by the conduct and market.
16. **Enforcement of the amendments to Competition Act:** methodological and analytical approaches for implementing the recent amendments to the Competition Act, particularly as it relates to buyer power and price discrimination.
17. **Institutional design for competition enforcement:** analyses of the goals, functions, and organisation of South African competition enforcement institutions and the extent to which they are relevant to the domestic circumstances of the country.

Proposal Adjudication

The evaluation process and criteria for acceptance of research proposals will be conducted by an internal Commission Research Grant Committee (RGC) comprising of members from across the Commission's divisions. The role of the RGC 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. Amongst those that meet the minimum requirements, the RGC will consider which proposals warrant funding based on the relevance of the topics to competition law and the special considerations relating to the multidisciplinary nature of the team, the involvement of early career researchers and the extent to which competition law is developed in the institution of higher learning. The combination of these factors will determine which proposals are put forward for acceptance by the Commission. The total number of grants awarded is subject to a budget cap.

Indicative timelines³

Actual timelines will be tailored to that which is required for your research. To present at the annual conference taking place this year, the following timeline will apply:

January 2026

Submission of research proposals

³ These timelines are subject to change. Grantees will be eligible to present at the Annual Conference the following year if the finalization of their research is delayed.

February 2026	Final adjudication of research proposals and grants
May 2026	Submission of first draft of research paper for review
July 2026	Submission of final research paper
October/November 2026	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 accompanied by a **detailed** research budget.

Proposals are to be submitted by email to mrgp@compcom.co.za; queries may also be submitted to this address.

END