

Open Access & Pricing Policy



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Introduction

Microscopy Australia is a coalition of university-based facilities brought together by Federal (NCRIS) and State government funding. We provide open access to microscopes and expertise distributed around the nation to keep Australia at the forefront of global research and innovation.

NCRIS funds selected high-end microscopy and microanalysis instruments and dedicated Engineers. Depending on what is more cost-effective, Engineers train the researcher to use the instrument, or operate the instrument for the user. NCRIS Engineers support researchers to deliver high-quality, high-impact research.

Microscopy Australia affiliated institutions have agreed to make not just the NCRIS-funded instruments, but all of their microscopy facilities available to researchers from around Australia, on the basis of merit. Directors of these Microscopy Australia facilities are referred to in this document as Facility Directors. See Appendix A for definitions of other terms used in this policy.

Open access policy

1. Access to instruments is based on a combination of scientific merit and feasibility of the program of work.
2. At least 30% of instrument time at Microscopy Australia facility is available for external users (researchers from outside the host facility).
3. Fees for NCRIS-supported instruments are discounted (see Pricing below) to ensure access for all Australian researchers.
4. Fees for instrument use and staff time are published on the host facility's web page. Registration is not required to view the fee schedule.
5. Formal or informal collaboration with staff at the host facility is not a compulsory requirement for instrument users.
6. There is no compulsory requirement to assign to the host institution intellectual property (IP) generated from use of Microscopy Australia facilities.
7. There is no compulsory requirement to make research data openly accessible before publication, when it was captured using Microscopy Australia facilities.

Access microscopy and microanalysis

To find the relevant technique and facility, we invite researchers to use [Technique Finder](#) our online technique finder. Researchers apply for access through the host facility where the microscopy work is to be carried out. A [list of facility contact information](#) is available on the Microscopy Australia website.

1. Apply for access

Each Microscopy Australia facility website will clearly explain the process from registration through to results and direct new users to a registration form.

Registration assigns users a local job number and begins the process of introduction at each institution. The form will capture a standard set of information for assessment purposes, and tracking of outcomes:

- Contact details of the user
- Project outline
- Clearly identified instrument access required
- Instrument experience (if any)
- Estimate of required time
- Sample type, estimate of sample preparation required
- Source of research funding
- Reporting
- Acknowledgement

Registration collects information for tracking of project outcomes

Facilities will collect metrics on instrument usage and research outcomes for inclusion in Microscopy Australia's reports to stakeholders. Where confidentiality clauses permit, Microscopy Australia will collect this information from institutions for reporting to NCRIS.

2. Assessment of project

Access is based on a combination of scientific merit and feasibility of the program of work

Research proposals are assessed at the host facility under the guidance of its Facility Director. A nominated assessment panel may include the local engineer, laboratory manager and other relevant technical and scientific staff. With approval from the Facility Director, the panel allocates instrument time to projects. Assessment criteria include the quality/feasibility of the project, availability of instrument time and support personnel. Projects are accepted at the discretion of the local Facility Director.

3. Lead time

Target lead-time: less than three weeks from acceptance of proposal through to booked access

Lead time depends on instrument demand, nature of the project, training requirements, and the availability and status of specimens. When demand is high, access is prioritised at the discretion of the relevant Facility Director, taking into account deadlines, life-time of specimens, innovative nature of the experiment, and/or visiting status of the researcher.

It must be noted that some high-end instruments have extended lead times due to the nature of the experiments performed on them and their uniqueness within Australia. While Microscopy Australia will strive for minimum lead-time, the target time may not always be achievable.

4. Access by commercial organisations

Commercial organisations requiring access to facilities for proprietary research do so via the process outlined above.

Microscopy Australia also provides fee-for-service and long-term partnership options for commercial organisations. The relationship can be negotiated to suit the industry client. See the [‘Industry’](#) section on our website for details and contacts.

5. Commercial fee-for-service

The Facility Director may assign staff to perform microscopy on behalf of a commercial client – under contract with the host institution – depending on instrument and staff availability and priority relative to other research projects.

Publish with acknowledgement

To keep supporting research, Microscopy Australia needs to track research outcomes.

For this reason, we request acknowledgment in publications or presentations resulting from access to Microscopy Australia facilities, as follows:

“The authors acknowledge the instruments and scientific and technical assistance of Microscopy Australia at the [insert name of facility], [insert name of University or Institution], a facility that is funded by the University, and State and Federal Governments.”

Pricing

See the host facility's web page for a full list of staff and instrument fees relevant to your project.

Table 1: Microscopy Australia fee structure*

Instrument type	User type	Fee range
NCRIS instruments	External from industry	Commercial rates as determined by the Facility Director
	Internal	\$30-100 per hour (institutional subsidies may be offered)
	External from Australian non-industry [^]	\$30-100 per hour (or the rate for internal users, if that is higher)
	International non-industry [^]	At discretion of the Facility Director
Other	External from industry	Commercial rates as determined by the Facility Director
	Internal	Rates that are affordable with typical Australian research grants
	External from Australian non-industry [^]	Rates that are affordable with typical Australian research grants
	International non-industry [^]	At discretion of the Facility Director

* Excludes arrangements with institutions under MOU or other mechanisms of collaboration or agreements that require different fee structure (eg ARC or LIEF collaborations).

[^] Non-industry organisations include universities, publicly funded or medical research organisations, CRCs.

Fees for NCRIS instruments are discounted for all users. Internal and non-industry users should not be charged fees for support from NCRIS-funded Platform Scientists.

Fees for NCRIS instruments are to be reviewed by the Microscopy Australia Operations Team every two years. Changes are approved by the Microscopy Australia Board. Any changes to fees must be published in this Open Access & Pricing Policy.

Grievances

Please report grievances related to instrument access to the relevant Facility Director. Grievances will be handled in accordance with the procedures of that institution.

Grievances not related to a specific institution should be reported to the Microscopy Australia Chief Operating Officer (lisa.yen@micro.org.au).

Appendix A: Definitions

Host institution: legal entity affiliated with Microscopy Australia – usually a University.

Host facility: microscopy facility within the host institution, where a given instrument is housed.

Facility Director: each institution affiliated with Microscopy Australia has an identified Facility Director.

Operations Team: a committee formed of the Facility Directors from each institution.

Internal users: users from the host institution.

External users: users from institutions, government bodies or commercial or industrial organisations outside the host institution.

Instrument fees: fees charged per hour of usage of an instrument.

Laboratory Manager: the Laboratory Manager who oversees the operational aspects of the facility.

Lead time: interval from acceptance of a user registered project proposal to the start date for performing the experiment.

NCRIS instrument: high-end, high value (to researchers) instrument that is supported, wholly or partly, by NCRIS or an NCRIS-related funding program.

NCRIS-funded Platform Scientists: staff at institutions that are supported by NCRIS funding or an NCRIS-related funding program.

NCRIS related funding programs: funding programs that provide funding with priority to NCRIS-funded facilities (eg the NSW Department of Industry RAAP scheme).