



CHART Program – Course Brief

1. Background

The Kirby Institute at UNSW Sydney is a leading global research institute, recognised for its excellence in HIV research. The Institute has a long-standing commitment to strengthening HIV research capacity in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Cooper HIV/AIDS Research Training (CHART) Program is an initiative proposed by the late Professor David Cooper, founding Director of the Kirby Institute. An unconditional education grant provided by ViiV Healthcare has enabled this program to become a reality.

High quality HIV research is essential to inform and improve clinical care and programming. Equally important is that research is locally driven and investigates issues of greatest priority and relevance to local stakeholders.

In the Asia-Pacific region, there are an estimated 5.2 million people currently living with HIV, with less than 60% receiving treatment. The HIV epidemic in the region is complex, with significant differences between countries.

There is a need to strengthen the capacity for countries in the region to undertake high quality HIV research. This is reflected in the relatively low rates of HIV-related publications in peer-reviewed journals and the Kirby Institute's direct experience collaborating on regional HIV research projects.

2. Purpose

The CHART Program aims to inspire and increase the number of skilled and experienced researchers in the Asia-Pacific region, while addressing local HIV-related priorities. The Program will generate country-specific research findings, helping to ensure robust scientific evidence underpins regional HIV-related policy and practice.

3. Course overview

The CHART program will operate over 12 months through a 'learning by doing' model that includes three intensive skill-based workshops (6 days each) conducted at the Kirby institute, UNSW Sydney, with individual research projects conducted in home countries.

Participants will be provided with close guidance and mentoring support from experienced researchers over the 12 months program and through to the submission of manuscripts for publication. Participants will be encouraged to present findings at regional conferences, including the annual HIV forum convened by Virology Education.

A total of nine participants from low-, middle- and high-income countries in the Asia-Pacific region will be selected via a competitive entry process. Participants will be health

professionals with an interest in HIV-related research (please refer to Table 1 for a list of eligible countries).

Having a diversity of participants from low-, middle- and high-income countries is intended to facilitate the establishment of a regional support network between countries, and opportunities for collaborative HIV research projects. CHART alumni will be encouraged to provide mentoring support to new researchers.

Participants will be health professionals with an interest in HIV related research. Successful applicants will be either:

- Involved in HIV-related prevention, care and management, or
- Working within a Ministry of Health at a national or provincial level with responsibility for HIV-related policy development, or
- A university academic working in public health or clinical research with some involvement in HIV-related research.

Table 1. Eligible countries from the Asia-Pacific region

• Cambodia	• Lao PDR	• Solomon Islands
• China	• Mongolia	• Taiwan
• Fiji	• Myanmar	• Thailand
• Hong Kong SAR, China	• Papua New Guinea	• Timor-Leste
• Indonesia	• Philippines	• Vietnam
• Japan	• Republic of Korea	

Workshop 1. Developing a research question and study protocol

Participants will develop a thorough understanding of research principles. Teaching will take place through lectures, discussions, exercises and use of completed and published operational research. With the support of course lecturers and mentors, participants will formulate research questions, draft a research protocol and complete an application for ethics approval, before returning to their home country. Topics covered include:

- Introduction to research principles
- Developing research protocols
- Research terminology
- Patients and data
- Asking the right research questions
- Simple analysis
- Aims and objectives
- Ethics

Workshop 2. Data management and analysis

Participants will gain an understanding of the importance of good data quality and will develop an efficient electronic data entry form, based on principles adaptable to their specific needs and understanding about data analysis. Topics covered include:

- Importance of good data
- Designing an efficient data entry
- Making an efficient computer data entry questionnaire
- Entering and validating data entry
- Applying knowledge to specific needs of each participants
- Introduction to data analysis
- Practical exercises

Workshop 3. Writing a scientific paper

Participants will perform final analysis and undertake interpretation of the results of their studies. Scientific papers will be drafted for submission to a national or international peer-reviewed journal for publication. Guidance will be given on online submission and responding to editors' and reviewers' comments. Topics covered include:

- Data analysis
- Construction of tables and figures

- Principles of writing a scientific paper in a step-by-step manner
- Hands-on exercises in scientific writing
- Online submission and peer review

4. Selection criteria for successful applicants

Applicants must satisfy the following essential selection criteria:

1. Currently working in a national, state or non-government organisation or major health institution and be involved in an HIV-related program.
2. Have a Masters in Public Health (MPH) or the equivalent.
3. Fluency in written and spoken English (the language of course delivery), demonstrated through compliance with UNSW's English language [requirements](#).
4. Access to relevant HIV-related public health or clinical data for research purposes.
5. Availability and capacity to meet all course milestones (refer to the TDR milestones at https://www.who.int/tdr/capacity/strengthening/sort/about_sort/en/).

Applicants must provide the following documentation:

1. Supporting evidence demonstrating compliance with UNSW's English language requirements (please refer to <https://www.unsw.edu.au/english-requirements-policy> for the required standardised English language score).
2. Curriculum Vitae (five page maximum).
3. Contact details of two professional referees.
4. Written commitment to attend all three workshops of the CHART Program, return to their program or institution after the course and implement course knowledge at a program level for a minimum of at least 18 months.
5. Letter of Support from the applicant's employer granting the applicant permission to attend all CHART workshops, the time required to undertake the research project (within a 6 to 8 month timeframe) and publish findings in a peer-reviewed journal.
6. Written statement from a local mentor (if available and not essential) describing how the mentor knows the applicant and how the mentor proposes to provide support to complete the course successfully.
7. A written statement (one to two pages only) addressing the following:
 - a. The applicant's motivation for undertaking the CHART Program and their expected outcomes;
 - b. Description of an HIV-related problem that has been identified within a given local program (the research will need to be carried out within a 6 to 8 month time frame);
 - c. A proposed HIV-related research question, based on a local problem, suitable for development into a research project.
 - d. Impact of the proposed research.
 - e. Description of the data available to answer the proposed research question. Existing administrative data are preferred to prospective studies due to the CHART timeframe. The use of data from another study that has already been collected, but not already analysed or earmarked for analysis by another party, may be considered.

5. Research questions – guidance for the applicant

In your application, you will be asked to formulate and submit an HIV-related research question based on an identified local HIV-related problem within the program or health system in which you work. The research will need to be carried out within a 6 to 8 month timeframe.

Research projects should be based on routinely collected health data that are already available in registers, treatment records or electronic data sets.

Prospective studies and studies involving patient interventions and patient questionnaires are less likely to be accepted for this course as they cannot usually be completed within the timeframe.

6. Approach to training

This is a target-oriented training course, with defined milestones and expected outputs. Failure to fulfil the expected outputs linked to each workshop will lead to disqualification.

Participants will attend workshops at the Kirby Institute at UNSW Sydney, Australia, and undertake research projects in their home country. From this research, participants will produce a manuscript to be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal for publication.

Since a key objective of the CHART Program is to foster HIV evidence-informed decision making, research studies should be published within 18 months of submission to assess impact on the health policy and practice.

7. Faculty for the course

The course will be conducted by an experienced and reputed faculty comprised of lecturers and facilitators with extensive experience in undertaking research and mentoring students.

The CHART Program is based on the successful Structured Operational Research Training Initiative (SORT IT) and conducted in partnership with TDR, the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases, hosted at the World Health Organization.

8. What does the participant gain?

- Practical skills for undertaking the entire operational research process from concept to publication.
- Experience of learning and sharing knowledge within a team of motivated participants and skilled lecturers and facilitators from different technical backgrounds.
- Manuscript and potential publication(s).
- Regional research network through the Kirby Institute and CHART participants plus alumni.
- Well placed to consider enrolment in a PhD.

9. What does the participant's organisation or institution gain?

- A person who is well trained in operational research and can support and facilitate their program or institution to undertake relevant operational research to identify challenges and improve program performance in a sustainable manner.
- The approach will strongly complement "innovation" within routine operations and contribute to critical reflection on program orientation and its impact over time.
- The initiative will foster the retention of healthcare professionals, attract qualified staff and reduce turnover which may hamper continuity of research initiatives.
- Local research mentor for future research candidates.

10. Course follow-up

Participants will be contacted intermittently after course completion to determine accomplishments and policy and practice impact of their studies. They will also become part of an operational research “alumni”. A specific website exists to foster interaction.

Course lecturers and facilitators will be available to provide advice upon request.

11. Course costs

All travel related expenses (flights, accommodation, ground transportation in Australia and visas) are covered by the Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney. Participants will be paid a daily allowance while in Australia for meals and incidentals. There are no tuition costs associated with the CHART Program.

12. Key dates and further information

Please refer to <https://kirby.unsw.edu.au/research-training> for details on the CHART Program offered through the Kirby Institute.

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The CHART program is supported by an unconditional education grant from ViiV Healthcare and conducted in partnership with TDR, the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases, hosted at the World Health Organization.

