

AFRICAN MICROBIOME INSTITUTE (AMI)

Division of Molecular Biology and Human Genetics, Department of Biomedical Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE AND GUIDELINES FOR REQUESTING MICROBIOME ANALYSIS SUPPORT

Scope:

The AMI employs a computational biologist who is available to assist SU researchers with microbiome-related research protocol development and analytical/technical support. For such a service to be optimal, it is important to adhere to procedures outlined in this document. This will ensure that the best practise is followed and is beneficial to all parties involved.

Prioritize the following checks before seeking assistance from the computational biologist:

1. Ensure that **ample time** is allotted for the consultation process prior to submission deadlines relating to the research undertaken
 - a. At least 4 – 6 months prior to thesis/dissertation/manuscript submission
 - b. At least 1 – 2 months prior to conference abstract submission
 - c. At least 3 months prior to grant application submission
2. Identify the **type of assistance needed** (e.g., protocol preparation, data management plan, sequencing plan, data analysis, data interpretation, etc.)
3. Identify, as far as possible, the **level of assistance expected** (e.g., advice, training, assistance, analysis).

Key responsibilities:

1. The AMI is responsible for overseeing and notifying SU researchers engaged in microbiome projects about the availability of this service.
2. The AMI computational biologist will assist the researcher(s) with their analysis and/or protocols on a consultation or collaborative basis as determined and agreed on by both parties.
3. The student/researcher/principal investigator (PI) is required to adhere to the stipulated regulations in this document and assumes ultimate responsibility for the protocol development and/or data analysis.
4. The student/researcher/PI is responsible for involving the AMI as early as possible in the research process.
5. The student/researcher/PI is responsible for ensuring that the AMI is acknowledged in all research outputs related to the service provided.

Procedure:

1. The student/researcher/PI must fill out the AMI support request form, available online or by request to Dr Kristien Nel Van Zyl (knvz@sun.ac.za).
The request form gathers the following information:
 - Name of researchers involved

- Project title, type & stage of research
 - Type of assistance required
2. Requests for assistance will be prioritised based on the date received by the AMI.
Once approved, the AMI computational biologist will arrange a consultation with the student/researcher/PI to discuss the type of assistance required, timelines, and other requirements.
 3. Following the first consultation, a formal contract will be set-up and signed by both parties.
 4. Rates: An hourly fee will apply, and will be estimated based on number of sessions required.
The fee is payable upon receipt of an invoice.