THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

2025 Early Career Researcher Grants scheme

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KEY DATES AND SELECTION PROCESS OVERVIEW

Monday 4 March	**Scheme Opens**
SEE WEBPAGE	Some faculties may have internal application requirements or deadlines prior to the submission dates listed here. Please see the ECR webpage for the most up to date information.
Friday 26 April	**Applications due** Applicants must first submit through SmartyGrants, then upload the final PDF to the Themis Grants Workbench. Applications without a corresponding Themis submission will not be forwarded for assessment.
Early May	**Eligibility Review** After the submission deadline, all applications will be reviewed for eligibility and compliance by the Researcher Development Schemes team in RIC
Monday 27 May to Friday 5 July	**Faculty Ranking** Applications are first assessed by a committee in your faculty, who produce a recommended ranking for applications in your faculty. Around 70% of the Central Selection Committee's final award of grants for the ECR program are made according to these recommendations from the faculty ranking process.
September	**Central Selection Committee** The Central Committee is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Capability) and is made up of senior academics from across the University and disciplines. The committee considers the rankings provided by each Faculty to ensure fair process and will finalise around 70% of the final selections according to the provided ranking. The remaining 30% of scheme funding is used to support projects aligning with strategic institutional objectives, specifically considering interdisciplinarity, equity and diversity, and equitable distribution of funding across faculties and disciplines.
October	**Outcomes announced**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

If applicants are concerned that they may have an eligibility issue, they should in the first instance contact their Faculty ECR Grant administrator for advice (contacts are listed on the scheme webpage). If eligibility cannot be confirmed, they should contact RIC via res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au.

PhD Award Date

How is the five-year window calculated?	The five-year window is counted backwards from the application submission date. For grants in 2025, the eligibility window for PhD award date is between 26 April 2019 and 26 April 2024.
What is the PhD completion date?	This is addressed in the scheme guidelines: The award of the PhD is defined as the date of the official notification letter or, for those awarded PhDs where the institution does not supply such letters, the date that the applicant has completed all the required steps to be eligible to graduate with a PhD. Submission of a PhD for examination is not an indication that all steps have been completed
Can I request an exemption from	Significant interruptions in the applicant's career since they completed their PhD that

the PhD eligibility window?	impact their eligibility for the scheme are considered through submission of an Eligibility Exemption Request (EER). See the scheme guidelines for further details on EERs.
What if I haven't yet received my PhD notification letter (or equivalent)?	We are not able to consider submissions from applicants who will not receive the above PhD notification by the full application due date. Exemption requests will not be considered for this reason.

UoM Contract

What if my appointment doesn't start until 2025?	You are eligible to apply if the prospective Head of School/Department signs off on the certification form for your application. If awarded, your contract must be in place by 1 January 2025, and you must keep it for the duration of the ECR grant.
I am on a fixed term or casual appointment, but my contract does not extend into next year (yet).	You are eligible to apply if the prospective Head of School/Department signs off on the certification form for your application. You should speak with the Head of Department (HoD) well in advance of your application to ensure you have their support for a fixed term contract extension for the duration of 2025 if successful.
If I am on sabbatical or SSP(L) in 2025, can I still work on my project/use my funding?	You should work with your Faculty Research Office contact to confirm arrangements and ensure this is clearly detailed in your application to satisfy the feasibility component of the selection criteria.
I am employed by an affiliated institute, and have an honorary appointment at UoM, can I apply?	You may apply for the ECR grant if you are an honorary staff at UoM if you are employed by one of the eligible affiliated research institutions for the 2025 round. These are: • Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre • The Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health • Bionics Institute • The Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute • Melbourne Business School (MBS) • Orygen/CYMH *[noting that most staff of CYMH are directly employed by the University, meaning they can apply under 4.1(b) of the guidelines]*

Previous Funding or Pending Applications

I have been the Lead CI or Fellow on an NHMRC or ARC grant or any other discipline-specific equivalent external grant	You are not eligible to apply for the ECR grant.
What counts as 'discipline-specific' equivalent external grants?	As per the guidelines, applicants are ineligible if they are, or have been, the Chief Investigator or major beneficiary of an ARC or NHMRC grant (or a discipline-specific equivalent) since the award of their PhD (on the same or a different research proposal), on the basis that the ECR's track record is already being supported. This also applies to researchers who have only received international funding. For clarity, this refers to any externally funded and competitive fellowships or grants that provide significant funding and opportunity, and thereby have already significantly increased the applicant's track record and competitiveness to secure external funding (e.g., future ARC, NHMRC or MRFF funding. If you have received a research award but are unsure whether it would be deemed 'significant' in this regard, please email the Researcher Development Schemes team to seek advice on the award/eligibility from Chancellery Research and Enterprise. As per the guidelines, preference will be given to applicants who have not previously received funding from any sources, however, applicants (other than those noted in 4.5) with some previous or current funding may still be eligible to apply and the significance and relevance of any previous funding held will also be considered by the relevant faculty and central selection committees, in reference to the Scheme Guidelines and objectives.

I have previously held a consultancy that was not obtained through a competitive process	You are eligible (with regard to previous funding).
I have previously held a University of Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship, including a Melbourne, McKenzie, Mary Lugton, or Puzey Fellowship.	You are not eligible to apply for the ECR grant.
I have previously been awarded/currently hold a UOM McKenzie, Melbourne, Mary Lugton or Puzey Postdoctoral Fellowship	You are not eligible to apply for the ECR grant if you have previously been awarded any of these internally funded fellowships. It is possible to apply for both the ECR grant and one of these fellowships for funding in 2025, however, applicants who are successful in both programs would be required to relinquish one of the awards.
I have previously been awarded an internal research grant/fellowship funded by my faculty, school or department at the University of Melbourne.	You may still apply for the ECR Grant; however, your faculty may consider your prior research funding experience when ranking your application for the central selection committee.
I have previously been awarded a UoM ECR Grant	You cannot apply for a second ECR grant or apply for two ECR grants in the same round. There is no limit to how many times you can apply for the ECR grant if you have previously been unsuccessful but are still within the eligibility window.
Will applications under consideration for funding elsewhere impact my eligibility?	Any applications for funding where the outcome of the proposal is not yet known, will not impact eligibility to the ECR grant program. If you are subsequently awarded an additional external grant, you will be able to hold both so long as the funded activities/aims do not overlap. You should be clear in your application how the proposed ECR Grant is distinct from other research funding (both past, current, and requested).
With regards to Parts B and E of the application form, what is meant by a 'distinct' research proposal?	To clarify this requirement, there are two important aspects to the required distinctiveness of the proposed ECRG project. 1 - Where the applicant is seeking funding for the same or a similar research project from a variety of funding sources at the same time, the proposed ECRG project must be 'distinct' in timeframe, scope and aims from projects that have been funded or submitted for funding in other internal and external schemes. 2 - As per the guidelines, 'applications that request funds that duplicate or supplement another current internal University of Melbourne grants, external grants, or research contracts will be excluded from consideration'. The ECR grant also cannot be used to 'top-up' an existing grant of funding held by the applicant or anyone else the applicant is working with. Where there is close alignment, overlap or similarity between your ECRG project and a project already funded or an application submitted for funding, you can provide brief explanation of the distinct timeframe, scope and aims of your ECRG project in the application form at the boxes in Part A [the last eligibility point where there is a box for free text] and Part E3 [the last box].

Can I use the application I've submitted for an internally-funded fellowship or grant (such as the McKenzie Postdoctoral Fellowship), while also adjusting the objectives to align with a one-year research timeframe for the ECR grants scheme?	As per above answer, by reducing the proposed project to a 1-year timeframe, and sufficiently amending the scope and aims of the project given the shorter duration, you may do this. Please note, if you were awarded both internal awards, you would need to relinquish one of them. This is based on ensuring fair and equitable distribution of institutional investments in researcher capability. As per the guidelines under Funding Conditions, applicants who are successful in obtaining ECRG funding for 2025, and *subsequently* win an *externally-funded* competitive grant for funding of a *distinct* project in 2025, will be able to hold both awards.
Can pre-prints or papers under review be included in the application?	In the Project Description, applicants may include preprints but they must be citable/publicly available to allow assessors to refer to them. In the Top 5 Publications section, papers under review or shared by not publicly available (e.g., under review or in-press) may also be included. Papers in preparation (i.e., developmental work not yet shared publicly or to a peer-reviewed publisher) cannot be cited or referenced in the application.
Can my application be assessed and ranked by a different Faculty to the one I am employed in?	If you feel your proposed project is in a discipline not well-represented in your Faculty or is more relevant to another Faculty, you may contact the Research Development Scheme team in RIC to explain the context of your ECRG research proposal, and seek advice on how to proceed.
Is a Doctorate of Education (DEd) considered equivalent to a PhD for the purposes of applying for the ECRG?	Yes. DEd is considered equivalent to a PhD for this scheme.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Most instructions are provided within the application form. As many ECR Grant applicants have limited experience applying for research funding, we have compiled some additional explanation and assistance below, corresponding with key sections of the application form.

- Applications must comply with the formatting, page and word limit requirements described in the application form.
- All questions must be answered or marked N/A.
- Applications must contain all the information necessary for assessment of the project without the need for explanation or reference for further documentation, including reference to internet sources.

Part A: Applicant Summary

A2. Host Department

Indicate whether the ECR grant, if awarded, would be hosted within the University of Melbourne or if you are applying through a position at an eligible affiliated institute. If your ECR Grant, if awarded, would be hosted in a school or department of the University of Melbourne, you will be prompted to select the relevant Faculty and School/Department.

- If you previously indicated that the grant, if awarded, would be hosted in an eligible affiliated institution, you will be prompted to select the affiliate institute proposing to host the grant.

If you are unsure which option to select, please contact your faculty contact in the first instance, then you can email res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au for further clarification.

A3. Appointment Details

If you have had multiple appointments at UoM, please use the start date of your first appointment. Casual employees are not normally eligible for the ECR grant, unless their Head of Department (HoD) certifies via the Certification Form that, if

successful, the applicant will be on a fixed-term or continuing appointment for 2025.

Part B-1: Eligibility Exemption Request

Applicants who are not eligible under 4.1-4.5 of the Scheme Guidelines may complete the Eligibility Exemption Request if appropriate to their circumstances.

Please summarise any career interruptions (e.g. acute or chronic illness, childbearing, child rearing or primary responsibility for the sustained care of a dependent family member), explaining the impact on your research outputs/career trajectory, use the calculator available on the scheme webpage to calculate and map out any interruption/s, and copy this to the application. You need to demonstrate how the total duration of the interruptions you have experienced brings your 'effective years of scholarly research opportunity post-PhD' to within five years, with the interruptions taken into account.

Part C: Proposed Budget

The Total Amount Requested is automatically calculated from the 'Amount Requested for Category' totals column.

Funds will not be provided for the following purposes:

- Chief Investigator salaries and/or on-costs.
- Fees for international students or Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) or Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) liabilities.
- Staff seeking funding for their own postgraduate studies.
- Costs not directly related to research or the project.
- Funds that duplicate or supplement another current internal University grant, external grant, or research contract.
- Non-specialist equipment available readily to university staff through Faculties, such as desktop computers or laptops;

- Salaries for research collaborator(s). This does not include salaries for research support staff or technical support staff.
- Fees for publishing open access in subscription (hybrid) journals, sometimes called Article Processing Charges (APCs). Please note that the University already covers open access fees for many journals through open access publishing agreements, and free repository open access pathways are also available. Applicants should contact their discipline's liaison librarians for further advice or refer to https://library.unimelb.edu.au/openscholarship/open-access-publishing.
- Society membership fees.

SmartyGrants table

Applicants should only request items that are essential for the completion of the project. Only include items that you want funded under the scheme, not items being supplied from other sources.
- Please do not alter the 'Budget Category' column as these headings are mandatory.
- Leave the line blank if you are not requesting items in a particular category.
- List individual budget items for each category in the central column, with their individual costs.
- Enter the overall cost for that category in the third column.
- Only list items and their relevant details and costs. You can leave justifications to your project description.
- All costs should be listed excluding GST.

We recommend all applicants use the research costing and pricing tool to help with budget preparation. Cost-recovery (overheads) do not apply to internally funded programs, so please ensure that you select 'Budget with no cost recovery'.

| Cost Recovery Multiplier | 1.00 | ☐ Override default multiplier | ☑ Budget with no cost recovery |

Example Budget

Budget Category	Items requested (include individual costs)	Amount Requested for Category
Personnel	Laboratory assistant HEW 5.1, 0.4FTE for 1 year: $36,899	$36,899
Relief from teaching/other duties	Marking for Course X – X hrs: $400 Marking for Course Y – Y hrs: $200	$600

Equipment	2x Audio tape recorders: $300	$300
Maintenance	Lab consumables: $200	$200
Travel	Conference X airfare (Melbourne-China return): $1300 Conference X accommodation (5 days): $500	$1800
Other	N/A	$0

Total Amount Requested: $39,799

Budget Categories

Personnel

Requests for personnel should include:

- designation and level of the position (e.g., Laboratory technical assistant HEW 5.1).
- the Full-Time Equivalent fraction for part-time staff (e.g., 2 days per week is 0.40 FTE) or number of hours and hourly rate for casual staff, and;
- oncosts as are automatically included by the **research costing and pricing tool**

Applicants should clearly demonstrate a distinct divide between the activities of the Chief Investigator (applicant) and those of the Research Assistant, with appropriate levels of complexity for each. The tasks of the Research Assistants must be included in the budget justification and should be clear to the selection committee.

Relief from teaching/other duties

Requests for support to relieve a staff member of teaching and/or other duties should be specified in the application and will be considered where it is argued that this is essential for the research work and the successful outcome of the project and would be dependent on approval by the relevant Associate Dean (Research) in conjunction with the applicant's Head of Department/School. There is no set rate for requests to provide relief from teaching or other duties, however it should be based upon the specific tasks for which relief is required (e.g., lecturing, marking, student consultation) and the time involved.

Equipment

Researchers should plan to use existing equipment wherever possible and should not request funds for standard-issue items. Where similar items of equipment are available applicants must justify why existing equipment is not sufficient. Only items of equipment considered essential for the project should be included and must be justified. Indicate the cost of equipment, including installation, and the names of the manufacturer and supplier. The cost of equipment and installation should not be estimated but should be based on the latest prices that can be obtained from the supplier. Do not attach quotes to the application.

Maintenance

Maintenance includes consumables (major headings only); sets of printed material and microfilm; computing (other than funds requested for the purchase of computing equipment or the hire of personnel for data preparation or programming which must be included under 'Equipment', 'Personnel' or 'Other', as appropriate). Any requests for funds for programming, preparation and storage of data or the hire of external computer time must be fully justified. Estimate the prices that will apply at the time of purchase.

Travel

Travel funds may be provided for fieldwork and related expenses/allowances; for visits to and/or use of libraries, and/or the facilities of laboratories nationally, or internationally. Applicants may request funds to attend conferences or workshops, but this funding would generally be provided from other sources and so should be well-justified. Travel (e.g. flights) should be separately itemised from accommodation with destinations clearly marked (e.g. Melbourne to Sydney).

Applicants must ensure that the budget for travel expenses is *modest and reasonable*. The committee reserves the right to award less funding than is requested where the budget is deemed to be unreasonable. Requests which exceed the recommended ATO allowances are unlikely to be funded except in justified exceptional circumstances i.e. the applicant has a

mobility condition requiring additional travel support.

Other

Any other eligible cost items should be included here. This will often include services contracted from other organisations (e.g. consultation fees, purchasing data, training costs). It may also include costs for items that do not appropriately fit under the other headings (e.g. workshop services, mailing surveys). Reasonable costs associated with publication of project outputs (*not including open access charges as detailed on p. 3*) can also be included here but should be proportionate to the overall project expenditure and with a robust justification.

C2. Justification of the Budget

Explain why each item listed is essential for the project; do not simply restate information that is already provided in the budget. Justification of the claim should state why an item is required. The same level of explanation is required for all items. For example, if a full-time senior research assistant is requested:
- Why can't this work be done without a research assistant?
- Why are they needed full-time as opposed to part-time or casual appointments?
- Why is the experience of a senior research assistant, rather than a more junior assistant, required?

Part D: Project Description

Part D must be written in plain text. The information provided under each heading is indicative and is not meant to be prescriptive, nor is it an exhaustive guide to all the issues that might be relevant to the project proposed. It is recognised that different academic disciplines may take different approaches to completing this section. Project Descriptions must be prepared using the following headings:

* Aims, Significance and Expected Outcomes

This might include but is not restricted to an appreciation of progress in the field of the proposal, the relation of your work to the field in general and reference to the very best Australian and international research, how the research project aligns with both Academic Division and University strategic priorities. A full literature review is not required, but there should be enough information to show that the applicant is fully conversant with the field, the importance of the research, the degree of innovation involved in the project and the role of this grant in developing the applicant's research. *This section should also include the likelihood that the research will lead to:*
- A real conceptual advance.
- An important discovery, innovation or solution of an important practical problem.
- A contribution of economic or social benefit to Australia.
- On-going research collaboration with an external government organisation or industry.

* Research Plan, Methods, Techniques and Proposed Timing

Items that might be included are a clear indication of the scope and limitations of the project, a list of key stages in the project and, where appropriate, the experimental design.

* References

Provide a list of all the references that are cited in the Project Description. All references that are cited must be listed and all listed references must be cited. Applicants should format their reference list in a manner that is typical of their field of research (e.g., using the 'cited reference' format set out by a journal in their field).

Part E: Researcher Track Record

E1. Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE)

This section can be filled out regardless of whether the applicant has applied for an Eligibility Exemption. Applicants who have experienced career interruption can provide additional research outputs beyond the 5-year limit in accordance with the time frame of the interruption experienced.

E2. Curriculum Vitae and Research Outputs List

A maximum of 1 file may be attached. in .docx, .doc, or .pdf format. No additional supporting documents (references, etc.) will be

considered as part of the assessment process.

E3. Research Outputs

E3.i. describe how the award of this grant will benefit your career.

E3.ii. Describe your stated plans to secure future funding, and how this ECR grant will support those plans.

E3.iii. Describe how the ECR grant research project builds on or differs from your current research program and will help you establish an independent research program.

E4. External Collaborators including Students (where relevant)

Collaboration with parties external to the University of Melbourne is not a requirement of this program. If you wish to collaborate with anyone from another organisation, please add a new section for each entry and answer the sub questions.

Please clearly outline the specific contribution of each collaborator/student in your ECR project.

E5. Publications record

List your five best research outputs and provide a summary detailing your contribution and the impact they have made in your field. Including A summary of the common publishing practices in your field, particularly concerning how your field assesses research and publication quality. Examples may include authorship in alphabetical order rather than overall contribution to publication, relative role of last- named author, average citation numbers, publication numbers.

Part G: Declaration

If information in an application is later proved misleading or fraudulent, the award will be withdrawn.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Complete the form in SmartyGrants, except for the HoD certification section.
- Generate a PDF copy of your application and double check the sections with page limits.
- Submit the PDF to your Head of School/Department with the HoD Certification Form (available for download from the ECR Grants webpage).
- Upload the signed certification form into the SmartyGrants application and submit via SmartyGrants. Once the final application is submitted it cannot be altered.
- A Themis Grant submission is required for non-MRI based applicants. MRI-based applicants should contact res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au for assistance.
- Complete the Themis submission and copy the Themis submission #ID to your SmartyGrants application. A walk through of this process is found here. The status of the workbench submission should be **'Forwarded to HoD'** by the end of submission day.