

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The University of Melbourne Early Career Researcher (ECR) Grant Scheme is supported equally by the Planning and Budget Committee, and Academic Divisions. Funding available from the Chancellery contribution will be matched by Academic Divisions.
- 1.2 This Scheme is a core part of the University's research development strategy, which places a high priority on the support of early career researchers.
- 1.3 Chancellery Research and Enterprise provides strategic guidance for the scheme, which is administered by Research, Innovation and Commercialisation (RIC) in conjunction with Academic Divisions.
- 1.4 Grant funding for the 2022 Scheme will be awarded for a period of one year only; 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022.

2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Scheme are to:

- Support early career researchers who demonstrate clear evidence of high research potential to progress their research careers;
- Encourage establishment of an early career researcher's research program;
- Provide competitive funding for high quality research projects and pilot research projects;
- Provide early career researchers with experience in preparing a grant application for peer review;
- Build early career researchers' track record in order to enhance competitiveness in bidding for external research funds;
- Provide research funding for projects that are strategically aligned with the University's priorities:
 - *Research at Melbourne*. <https://research.unimelb.edu.au/research-at-melbourne>
 - *Advancing Melbourne*. <https://about.unimelb.edu.au/strategy/advancing-melbourne>

3 RESEARCH AND ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED

- 3.1 The Scheme funds applications that support excellence in pure and applied research projects undertaken by individual researchers across all research fields. *Pure research* is experimental, exploratory or theoretical work undertaken to acquire new knowledge without necessarily looking for long-term application and impact other than the advancement of knowledge. *Applied research* is original work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge with the objective of a specific application.
- 3.2 The Scheme supports the creation or performance of a work of art only when it is/has:
 - Accompanied by exegesis or other form of critical analysis;
 - An enduring form;
 - Open to peer review.
- 3.3 Applications that are **not** primarily oriented towards research will not be considered. The following, for example, will **not** be funded under the Scheme:
 - a) Scholarly investigations that are not anticipated to lead to conceptual advances or discoveries, or to novel practical outcomes and applications.

- For example, projects such as uncritical bibliographical compilations, purely descriptive catalogues and editions that do not involve original research.
- b) Activities that lead solely to the creation or performance of a work of art.
- This includes visual art, musical compositions, drama, dance, designs or literary works. To be eligible for funding under this Scheme, such work would need to be accompanied by an exegesis or other form of critical analysis, in enduring form and open to peer review.
- c) Production of teaching materials.
- Regardless of whether research may be required in their creation.
- d) Development of research aids and tools, including computer programs.
- If the development of research aids and tools forms an integral part of the research project, the application needs to explicitly explain how the development of these tools contributes to the research objectives and outcomes.

4 FUNDING

- 4.1 Central funding shall be allocated to the Scheme as follows:
- 70% of the central funding allocation will be allocated to applications that Academic Divisions support and have ranked in order of merit; the allocation of grants is in accordance with the 2019 block grant distributions and in line with the respective Academic Division rankings.
 - 30% of the central funding allocation will be allocated to supported applications from Academic Divisions, to include consideration of:
 - Interdisciplinary research.
 - Equity and diversity (e.g. Indigenous researchers and women in disciplines in which they are underrepresented).
 - A fair and equitable distribution across Academic Divisions, as determined by the central Committee.
- 4.2 Each grant awarded will comprise Chancellery funding and Academic Division funding (1:1).
- 4.3 For applicants from all Academic Divisions, grant funding shall normally be awarded as follows:
- Minimum of \$5,000 and a maximum of up to \$25,000 for Architecture Building and Planning, Arts, Business and Economics, Education, Fine Arts and Music, and Law.
 - Minimum of \$5,000 and a maximum of up to \$40,000 for Engineering, Science, Medicine Dentistry and Health Sciences, and Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences.

Academic Divisions that wish to alter the maximum funding amounts may make a case for desired funding allocations and preferred candidates based on their own strategic priorities. Academic Divisions wishing to make a case must do so via their Associate Dean (Research), directly to the Chair of the Central Committee.

5 APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

- 5.1 Applicants must:
- a) Hold a salaried (fixed-term or continuing) academic appointment of at least 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) at Level A, B or C at the University of Melbourne, at the time of application;
- or**
- b) Have a confirmed appointment for a salaried (fixed-term or continuing) academic appointment of at least 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) at Level A, B or C at the University of Melbourne, that begins 1 January 2022 or before.
- 5.2 Applicants must hold or have reasonable expectation (at the time of application) of holding an appointment until 31 December 2022. Where applicants who do not hold a continuing appointment, or a fixed-term

contract appointment to 31 December 2022, their Head of Department/School must confirm salary support for contract extension in the certification section of the application form.

- 5.3 This scheme targets early career researchers who have been awarded a PhD within the last 5 years (on or after 26 July 2016¹) and before submission of this ECR application.

However, applicants who have had career interruptions or who have worked in an academic research organisation for less than 5 years FTE and received their PhD before 26 July 2016 may submit an eligibility exemption request. The special cases may include, but are not limited to, circumstances where the applicant's career has been significantly interrupted or affected by, for example, serious illness, child bearing or child rearing, primary care-giving for a family member or working with industry or outside the higher education sector where research was not the primary focus of the employment. Applicants whose research or research activity has been seriously constrained by the COVID19 pandemic may also document this for consideration by the eligibility subcommittee. Applicants should note that applying for an eligibility exemption does not automatically grant an exemption and is at the determination of the eligibility subcommittee.

- 5.4 An applicant may only ever be awarded one University of Melbourne ECR grant. Previous recipients of an ECR grant are not eligible to apply.
- 5.5 The applicant should demonstrate in their application that they have the time and basic infrastructure resources to pursue the project proposed, within the context of existing research, teaching and higher degree supervision responsibilities.
- 5.6 Research-only (RO) staff whose salary is sourced from an externally funded project must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the relevant Academic Division that the nature of their appointment means that they are allowed, and have the time available, to pursue additional research activities (see Part A4 of the Application Form).
- 5.7 Applicants who are/have been the first named/lead CI or major beneficiary of an ARC or NHMRC grant (or a discipline-specific equivalent), since the award of their PhD are not eligible to apply for this scheme.
- 5.8 Preference will be given to applicants who have not previously received funding from any sources, however applicants (other than those noted in 5.7) with some previous or current funding are eligible to apply and the significance and relevance of any previous funding held will be considered by the relevant faculty or school selection and ranking committee, in reference to the scheme guidelines and aims.

Applicants are eligible to apply if they have been awarded funding for:

- Salary only;
- Travel only (e.g. a travel grant);
- A research contract or consultancy (where the CI did not have to apply through a competitive process);

- 5.8 Only one (1) application may be submitted by an applicant in a single year.
- 5.9 McKenzie Postdoctoral Fellows are ineligible to apply for an ECR grant, as the Fellowship Program incorporates an allocation for project costs and enhances competitiveness in applying for external research funds. Applicants who are successful in obtaining ECR funding for 2022 and are subsequently awarded a McKenzie Postdoctoral Fellowship to commence in 2022 must relinquish one of the awards.

¹ 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.

6 APPLICATION ELIGIBILITY

- 6.1 Applications must be submitted via the University of Melbourne's SmartyGrants application portal. Head of School/Department certification is required on a separate page that must be uploaded as a PDF into the online application before submission. Signatures may be handwritten, approved digital signatures, or image files used with explicit permission of the signatory.
- 6.2 All application completion and formatting requirements must be adhered to as detailed in Section 3.1 – Section 3.5 of the Instructions to Applicants document.
- 6.3 Selection committees will only assess application material that adheres to word or page limits. Any excess material will not be provided for review by selection committees.
- 6.4 Requested funding must adhere to the minimum and maximum amounts detailed in Section 4.3 of this document. Any application that requests less than the minimum funding awarded or more than the maximum funding available per project will be ruled ineligible.
- 6.5 Applications which request funds that duplicate or supplement another current internal University of Melbourne grant, external grant or research contract will be excluded from consideration. If an applicant already holds a grant in a related area, it is the applicant's responsibility to provide sufficient information to assure their Academic Division that the ECR grant is not being used to 'top-up' another existing grant. Please refer to Section 3 (A4) of the Instructions to Applicants document for instructions on how to address this.
- 6.6 Applicants who are successful in obtaining ECR funding for 2022, and subsequently win an external Australian Competitive Grant for funding in 2022, will be able to hold both awards.

7 APPLICATION PROCESS

- 7.1 Prospective applicants should read and follow the Instructions to Applicants document prepared by RIC when completing their application.
- 7.2 Applications submitted will not be checked by RIC for completeness or eligibility prior to final lodgment; this is the responsibility of the applicant. Ineligible or incomplete applications will be excluded and not considered by the Committees.
- 7.3 Applicants will need to adhere to the particular internal submission requirements of each Academic Division, and should see the [RIC website](#) for specific requirements.

8 BUDGET ITEMS

8.1 Budget items supported

- 8.1.1 Items that directly support the research program, which may be funded, are:
 - a) Personnel;
 - b) Relief from Other Duties;
 - c) Equipment;
 - d) Maintenance;
 - e) Travel;
 - f) Other.

Please refer to Section 3 (Part C) of the Instructions to Applicants document for further guidance on supported budget items and budget justification. The committee reserves the right to made reasonable adjustments to the budget of an awarded project.

8.2 Budget items not supported

8.2.1 Funding may not be sought or used to fund Chief Investigator salaries and/or on-costs.

8.2.3 Funds will not be provided for the following purposes:

- a) Fees for international students or Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) or Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) liabilities;
- b) Staff seeking funding for their own postgraduate studies;
- c) Costs not directly related to research or the project;
- d) Funds that duplicate or supplement another current internal University grant, external grant or research contract;
- e) Non-specialist equipment available readily to staff, such as desktop computers;
- f) Salaries for research collaborator(s). This does not include salaries for research support staff or technical support staff.
- g) Article Processing Charges (APC) to make a work openly accessible where the University already has an institutional subscription to the journal (hybrid journals). Researchers who wish to publish in subscription journals can make their work openly accessible through the deposit of a copy of their work in the institutional repository, [Minerva Access](#). Applicants should contact their [local liaison librarians](#) for further advice.

9 SELECTION CRITERIA

9.1 All applications will be assessed by an Academic Division Research Committee and the ECR Grant Scheme Central Committee using the following selection criteria:

- a) Researcher Development (40%)
 - How the project will contribute to the researcher's career development and enhance their competitiveness in securing external funding in the future to support their research program. This includes a statement on applicant's plans to secure funding in the future.
- b) The Quality of the Project (30%)
 - Significance of the project (including some consideration of the alignment with University and Academic Division strategies), and the extent to which the project is soundly conceived and planned.
- c) Feasibility (15%)
 - The extent to which the project is feasible given the timelines and budget, and the skills, experience and time commitment of the Chief Investigator and any collaborator(s).
- d) Resources (15%)
 - The extent to which the budget is justified and appropriate.

9.2 Consideration will also be given to the likelihood that the research proposed 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;
- Ongoing research collaboration with an external government organisation or industry.

10 EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

10.1 A committee established by each Academic Division, chaired by the respective Associate Dean (Research) or equivalent, will initially assess applications on a competitive basis in accordance with the objectives of the Scheme (Section 2 of this document) and the selection criteria (Section 9 of this document), prior to consideration by the ECR Grant Scheme Central Committee. Each Academic Division will rank and list which applications they will support for central funding consideration. Academic Divisions are asked to rank all

applications based on the merit of the application, according to the objectives of the scheme and the selection criteria, and to provide short justifications for these rankings.

- 10.2 The ECR Grant Scheme central committee, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) or delegate, will consider all applications ranked by Academic Divisions and determine final funding allocations.
- 10.3 The ECR Grant Scheme Central Committee reserves the right to discuss applications, on a confidential basis, with Deans, Associate Deans (Research), Heads of Department/School, Centre Directors or other senior colleagues.

11 TIMETABLE

10 May 2021	Release of Funding Guidelines
Monday 7 June 2021, 3pm	Eligibility Exemption Requests (EERs) due to RIC
End of June 2021	Outcomes of EERs provided
Monday 26 July 2021, 3pm	Final applications due to RIC
6 August 2021 (<i>on or before</i>)	RIC provides eligible applications to Academic Divisions
3 September 2021 (<i>on or before</i>)	Academic Divisions provide rankings and funding amounts to RIC
October 2021	ECR Grant Scheme central committee meeting to decide on final allocations based on Academic Division recommendations
End of October 2021	Outcomes announced

Please note that some Academic Divisions may have additional internal submission requirements prior to the final RIC submission date – please see [the RIC webpage](#) for details.

12 APPEALS

- 12.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) has established/will establish an independent Appeals Committee.
- 12.2 Appeals will be heard only against the implementation or exercise of the selection procedures. Appeals will not be heard against Academic Division or ECR Grant Scheme committee rankings or comments as to the academic merit of applications. An applicant should appeal only where there is clear evidence that the implementation or exercise of the selection procedures has contravened the Funding Guidelines.
- 12.3 Applicants wishing to appeal against a decision must notify the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Capability) in writing within twenty-eight (28) days of advice of the outcome of the application.

13 CONDITIONS OF GRANT

- 13.1 Grant offers must be accepted by the Chief Investigator and their Head of Department/School by means of a fully signed Research Grant Acceptance Form.
- 13.2 The Chief Investigator is responsible for the project, for its concept, the strategic decisions called for in its pursuit and for the communication of the results.
- 13.3 The Chief Investigator will be the contact person for all administrative matters to do with the project.

- 13.4 The Chief Investigator must ensure that the research is conducted in accordance with University policy, including compliance with the Code of Conduct for Research and policies on human research ethics, animal experimentation ethics, requirements of the Office of Gene Technology Regulator, health and safety and intellectual property. No project may proceed unless the appropriate ethical or other required clearances have been obtained.
- 13.5 Should a successful project involve any external collaborators, the collaborators must enter into an appropriate contractual agreement with the University. The Chief Investigator of a successful project involving an external collaborator must contact RIC as soon as this is known to arrange for a contract to be established.
- 13.6 Funding is for one year only, commencing 1 January 2022. Projects must be complete and funds expended by 31 December 2022.
- 13.7 Extensions for fund expenditure and completion may be considered under the following circumstances. Extensions will not be granted over six months except in the case of approved parental leave from regular employment for the equivalent period, such as for parental leave or prolonged sick leave.
- a) Exceptional Circumstance(s)
- A written request for an extension that details the exceptional circumstance(s) must be approved by the Chief Investigator's Head of Department/School, and submitted to ric-internalgrants@unimelb.edu.au, no later than 30 November 2022. The maximum extension considered will be completion by 30 June 2023. A *pro forma* is available from [the RIC website](#).
- b) Parental Leave
- The completion date will be extended by the length of the Parental Leave taken. Grant holders should advise both their Academic Division and RIC when parental leave is approved.
- 13.8 The Chief Investigator must comply with any instructions and/or conditions in the Offer of Grant relating to approved items of expenditure.
- 13.9 Unless special conditions are set down by the Committee, the grant should be regarded as a 'one-line budget'. The Chief Investigator is responsible for ensuring that the expenditure of the grant is broadly in accord with the budget presented in the application and is always consistent with the nature and aims of the specific project approved and the objectives of the Scheme.
- 13.10 Should the Chief Investigator's employment circumstances change (i.e. if the Chief Investigator moves to a new Department/School/Faculty) they must contact both RIC and their Academic Division ECR administrator immediately. Arrangements for the continuation of the ECR grant will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Chair of the ECR Grant Scheme Central Committee in conjunction with the relevant Academic Division(s).
- 13.11 Should the Chief Investigator's employment at the University of Melbourne cease during the grant-funded period, they must notify RIC and their Academic Division ECR administrator immediately and relinquish any remaining ECR funding. This is an internal grant and is non-transferrable.
- 13.12 **The Chief Investigator is required to provide a written report on the outcomes of the project by 31 May 2023 (unless there has been an approved extension to the project end date).** The final report form is found at [Manage Your Grant](#). Unsatisfactory reports will be referred to relevant Heads of Department/Schools and/or Associate Deans (Research) for comment or follow-up action. Summaries of funded projects and project final reports may be published. Please note that failure to provide this report by the deadline may result in future applications to University of Melbourne internal research programs being ruled ineligible.
- 13.13 **In addition to a final report of project outcomes, the Chief Investigator is required to provide a financial acquittal report.** The financial report is to be uploaded as an attachment into the final report form in SmartyGrants. Any unspent central funds remaining at the conclusion of the grant period must be

relinquished.

- 13.14 Successful applicants are expected to provide appropriate acknowledgement of University support when communicating research outcomes.