

Research Impetus Grants

Scheme Guidelines



Applications in 2026 for Research Impetus Grants commencing in 2027.

1 OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 The Research Impetus Grants scheme aims to support promising early-career and mid-career researchers who have experienced significant career disruption by providing targeted funds to assist them to regain their research momentum.
- 1.2 The University recognises that significant interruptions to research and career opportunity, or disruptive life experiences, may affect a researcher's capacity, productivity, outputs, or outcomes; and that the impact of a disruption may extend beyond the duration of a specific event.
- 1.3 The objectives of this scheme are to:
 - Improve equity of research opportunity at the University through bespoke financial support packages to alleviate common career disruptions that have stopped or inhibited the research trajectory of high potential researchers.
 - Boost grant recipients' research momentum with the aim of regaining their promising career trajectory; and
 - Support grant recipients' capacity to advance research programs, partnerships, networks, outputs or outcomes that contribute substantially to the researcher's program or discipline as well as the overall research capability of the University of Melbourne.
- 1.4 The Research Impetus Grants scheme supports the ambitions of the University's strategic plan, [*Strategy 2030*](#), and research strategy, [*Advancing Research 2030: Excellence for Impact*](#), by retaining outstanding academics and enabling diverse and inclusive research careers.

2 SCHEME PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 The Research Impetus Grants (RIG) scheme is guided by the following principles:
 - *Equity*: Building increasingly inclusive and equitable research career support at the University.
 - *Flexibility*: Responding to researchers' specific needs in re-establishing career momentum;
 - *Accessibility*: Streamlining the application and award process for the applicants and selection committees, given the personal nature of common career disruptions;
 - *Impact*: Providing funding for targeted research support that has strong likelihood of supporting academic staff to thrive (return to their potential prior research trajectory) by alleviating the negative impacts of disruption/s.
 - *Scale*: Expanding resources available to researchers by establishing a joint and coordinated Chancellery/Faculty scheme to support more researchers to regain their research productivity and momentum, in alignment with Faculty-led support initiatives.
 - *Strategic development*: Institution-wide access to this scheme will provide an evidence base for greater insight into the needs and gaps in supports across eligible researchers.

3 FUNDING AND ALLOCATION

- 3.1 Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (DVCR) strategic funding will contribute an annual sum of funding to this scheme, with the expectation that, where their supported applicants are successful, Faculties (Schools/Departments) will match the sum of funding that is provided to awardees in this scheme.

4 APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

- 4.1 Applicants are eligible for this scheme if:
- They have held, for a minimum of six months, a salaried fixed-term, or continuing (including Continuing Research Contingent) appointment with a Department of the University of Melbourne of 0.4 FTE or more, at Academic Level A, B or C, and will continue to hold the appointment for a requisite period to achieve the proposed outcomes of the grant; and
 - They are Education & Research, Academic Specialist, or Research Focussed; and 40% or more of their balance of academic activity is allocated to research, including during the proposed timeframe of the grant; and
 - They have experienced significant disruption/s that demonstrably impeded their research or career trajectory and occurred or was continuing within the timeframe 25 June 2021 to 25 June 2026 (i.e., within the prior five years to the closing date for applications to this scheme).
- 4.2 With respect to the first eligibility point above, the proposed project end date must not fall after the end of the current employment contract.
- 4.3 Applicants must not have outstanding Progress Reports or Final Reports from any other University of Melbourne researcher development scheme.
- 4.4 Research Impetus Grants are only available to salaried staff of the University of Melbourne who meet the above criteria and are based in any of the University of Melbourne's faculties or in the Melbourne Business School. Honorary staff of the University of Melbourne are not eligible for this scheme.
- 4.5 Academic staff may not hold a Research Impetus Grant concurrently with an (Chancellery funded) ECR Grant or an ECR Fellowship (McKenzie, Puzey or Mary Lugton). Staff who have previously held these grants or fellowships may apply for and hold a RIG but, for equitable allocation of internal research funding, will not be eligible to do so until they have completed or utilised their existing grant/fellowship.

Significant disruption/s

- 4.6 A significant disruption is one or more of the following:
- Caring responsibilities (with reduced research opportunity as a result)
 - Health conditions (including mental health)

- Parental leave or equivalent¹
- Unemployment or employment that offered no provision for research²
- Disability (temporary or permanent)
- Disaster management and recovery
- Limited or no access to facilities and resources—such as through workplace interruptions or lack of access to facilities
- Community obligations under Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultural practices and protocols
- Gender affirmation
- Other extraordinary/unanticipated life events.

- 4.7 To meet ‘significant’, the disruption/s must be of a duration of three consecutive months (90 days) at minimum and can be shown by the applicant to have had a negative impact on the applicant’s research program and trajectory.
- 4.8 Where COVID19 pandemic lockdowns and restrictions are relevant to one of the above categories of disruption as an exacerbating factor, applicants should identify and explain the specific impact of the pandemic to their disciplinary or research requirements, or personal situation.

5 APPLICATION PROCESS AND DOCUMENTS

- 5.1 Applicants should review the ‘How to Apply’ section of the [scheme website](#), including the Instructions to Applicants and FAQs, and the scheme dates below.
- 5.2 Applicants should also closely review their own faculties’ existing researcher supports (such as travel funds, research assistance, career recovery grants) to ensure they are not diminishing their own chances by applying for duplicative funds across schemes. This scheme is intended to complement, not substitute, available faculty supports.
- 5.3 Applicants may submit only one application to the Research Impetus Grants scheme in a year.
- 5.4 Academic staff can apply for a RIG more than once, but not for the same research activities. A second or later application must state outcomes of the earlier grant and specify how the proposed activities and expenditures are different to the earlier funded activities under this grants scheme.
- 5.5 The application process has two key stages and forms: the [Authority to Submit \(Faculty Confirmation Form\)](#)—a separate document available on the scheme website), and the [Application Form](#) (via SmartyGrants).
- 5.6 Completing the *Authority to Submit Form* is an opportunity for the applicant and the Faculty Delegate to privately discuss the disruptions that were experienced by the applicant, and mutually

¹ Inclusive of all forms of a new parenthood including but not limited to newly adopted/fostered child, birth of a child (including a surrogacy arrangement), or child bereavement leave.

² Where unemployment or non-research employment is relied on, faculty delegates should sight a copy of the relevant position description or contract to verify the lack of research opportunity.

assess the applicants' fit with this scheme. Through this discussion, the applicant and Faculty Delegate should complete and verify the *Authority to Submit Form*.

5.7 The [Authority to Submit Form](#) contains:

- A table with summary information about the disruption/s, the duration of the timeframe/s, and the total time of the claimed disruption.
- Confirmation by the nominated Faculty delegate that the claimed disruptions were discussed with the applicant, verified to the delegate's satisfaction, and where necessary, the delegate has viewed appropriate evidence.
- Confirmation by the nominated Faculty delegate that the total disruption is a significant disruption under the terms of the scheme that has impeded the applicant's research productivity and career trajectory.
- Confirmation by the Head of Department/School that employment conditions and reasonable workload adjustments will be put in place to enable the applicant to make full use of the grant, if successful.

5.8 The *Authority to Submit Form* should be signed by the applicant, the nominated Faculty delegate, and the applicant's Head of Department/School, and uploaded to the application by the Applicant.

5.9 The *Application Form* consists of:

- **Part A: Administrative Summary**
- **Part B: Education and Appointment Details** - including education record and appointment history, current appointment conditions and workload allocation.
- **Part C: Researcher Profile and Case for Support** - including academic CV of maximum 4-pages (as PDF); and outline of grants, funds, or supports that have been already awarded to the applicant (from any source) within the eligible disruption period and thereafter.³

Applications and attachments must comply with page length and formatting requirements, or the application will be deemed ineligible and will not be passed on to the selection committees.

Part D: Track Record and Research Trajectory - applicant's academic record and achievements (relative to opportunity) prior to the disruption and after the disruption/s, including explanation of how the disruption/s impeded their research record and career trajectory. *Applicants are not required to explain and discuss the details of the interruption in the Application Form, but to describe how the disruption/s changed or impacted their career momentum. Minimum personal details (as necessary to convey the circumstances) are required.*

- **Part E: Proposed Budget components** - outline of grant package requested, approximate costings and intended usage (see below) including: applicant's research plan outlining the activities proposed with the grants; how the grant/s will positively impact and/reestablish the applicant's research profile and trajectory post-disruption/s; and how the proposed

³ Where applicable, applicants should include any receipt of the Retention Benefit which is available under the Enterprise Agreement to all Academic and Professional staff returning to work from a period of parental leave (noting that the Retention Benefit is provided as a salary contribution to support the return to work, but not as a research grant to fund specific research-focused activities).

activities will strengthen the ability of the applicant to deliver high quality research and impact in their discipline.

5.10 All questions in the *Application Form* must be answered or marked 'not applicable'.

6 GRANT CATEGORIES

- 6.1 Applicants can apply for relevant grant components to a maximum of \$50,000 grant (i.e., \$25,000 DVCR funds, \$25,000 Faculty funds) per application under this scheme to support the regaining of their research momentum.
- 6.2 Applicants, in discussion with their faculty delegate, are encouraged to consider their unique circumstances and goals when tailoring the funding request. Applicants are encouraged to apply for grants/components that are reasonable and justifiable in their context.
- 6.3 Where Fringe Benefits Tax applies (categories (a) and (d) in the table below), applicants must include an estimation of this in their proposed grant budget in the budget line indicated (see Instructions to Applicant). Unless otherwise agreed, DVCR and faculties will equally contribute the calculated FBT amount. The DVCR-funded FBT share will be provided to the faculty post award of the grant, along with the other grant components, for faculty to administer.

	Component grants for research support	Maximum per application	DVCR/Faculty split
a	Carer or childcare expenses for research-related travel costs <i>i.e. expenses incurred by the staff member that are directly related to the cost of care during the time the staff member is travelling. For example: babysitting, alternative child carer travel costs, airfares for children, access to childcare at conference venue.</i> <i>*This grant component may require an additional budget line to cover Fringe Benefits Tax – see Instructions to Applicants</i>	Up to \$4,000	\$2000/\$2000
b	Conference funding	Up to \$4,000	\$2000/\$2000
c	External grant writing support	Up to \$5,000	\$2500/\$2500
d	Childcare or caring related expenses (non-travel related) where applicant is primary carer for school aged children (up to age 16) or other dependents to enable focused research time and productivity <i>For example: babysitting, access to childcare services located at research event/activities, after school/day-care costs.</i> <i>*This grant component may require an additional budget line to cover Fringe Benefits Tax – see Instructions to Applicants</i>	Up to \$5,000	\$2500/\$2500
e	Research project funds <i>Reasonable costs will be considered – may include specialised personnel; equipment and maintenance; applicant's own travel for research related purposes; funding for academic visitors to attend University of Melbourne where outbound travel is not available to the researcher</i>	Up to \$15,000	\$7500/\$7500

f	Funding for a short-term Research Assistant, Technical Assistant, Administrative Assistant or Research Fellow dependent on the type of research and area of need for support <i>i.e. RA, to continue field work, extra lab work or project coordination tasks</i>	Up to \$40,000	\$20,000/\$20,000
g	Disability adjustments relating to research capability <i>Where supports are not covered by other institutional/faculty schemes</i>	As needed to the \$50,000 cap	Co-funded as per award sum
h	Focused research time e.g. relief or reduction in duties, including teaching and/or marking relief to enable a concentrated period of research focus <i>If applying for teaching, marking or other relief from duties, explicit Head of Dept/School approval is required and must be indicated on the Authority to Submit Form (Faculty Confirmation) form.</i> <i>Unless otherwise authorised by the HoD/S, this scheme permits a teaching relief requests to a maximum of <u>one subject per RIG application</u>.</i>	Up to \$40,000	\$20,000/\$20,000

7 SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

- 7.1 The RIG Central Committee is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Capability) or other as nominated by the DVCR. The Central Committee will allocate grants across the applicant pool, informed by the selection criteria, Faculty ranked lists, and overall strategic and equity considerations.
- 7.2 **Selection criteria:**
- Evidence of the applicant's strong research trajectory, track record and achievements (relative to opportunity and within disciplinary context) *prior to the disruption/s*.
 - Feasibility and appropriateness of how the requested grant components and activities will assist the applicant to regain their potential research trajectory, with a clear path mapped out.
 - The degree of transformative impact of the grant, based on the applicant's explanation of how the grant outcomes will assist their future career path and profile.
 - The extent to which the applicant has or has not already had funding or career support since the disruption/s to recover their research momentum and trajectory.
 - The quality of the research plan in terms of likely contribution to disciplinary knowledge or impact and/or relevance to institutional or faculty research priorities.
- 7.3 This scheme is not intended for researchers who cannot demonstrate they had a promising research trajectory *prior to experiencing disruption/s*; nor, for promising researchers who experienced disruption/s but *have already demonstrably recovered* their career trajectory. Career

recovery should be understood as relative to the personal circumstances of the applicant and the discipline.

8 FUNDING CONDITIONS

- 8.1 The grant should be used within maximum two years of date of award. Recipients of a grant under this scheme will be asked to report on outcomes of the grant within two months of the grant end date. The Final Report template will be available on the Researcher Development Schemes website.
- 8.2 Permission to vary the grant is only approved on a case-by-case basis where exceptional circumstances apply and where it would be consistent with the scheme objectives and must be requested in writing to Chancellery Research and Enterprise via the variation of project agreement form sent to the Researcher Development Schemes team (res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au) in RIC.
- 8.3 In the case of parental or extended personal leave under Enterprise Agreement or legislative entitlement (requiring leave of absence or significant reduction in work fraction) being taken during the grant period, the completion date of the grant will be extended by the length of the leave/reduction taken. Awardees should advise both their Faculty and RIC when the leave is approved. Faculty Human Resources (HR) business partners are expected to amend employment records to reflect updates to leave or FTE reductions and RIC will update grant award records.

9 TIMETABLE

4 May 2026	Applications open
2:00 pm, 11 May 2026	Scheme webinar
3:00 pm 25 June 2026	Applications closing date
September 2026	Central selection committee
Mid-October 2026	Notification of outcomes
January 2027	Earliest date funds made available to awardees/Faculties
Grant recipients' final report	Within two months of the grant end date

10 ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACT

- 10.1 All application and administrative enquiries for the scheme should be directed via email to: res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au.

11 PROCESS NOTES FOR FACULTIES

- 11.1 The nominated Faculty Delegate is preferably the Associate Dean (Diversity and Inclusion) within a faculty, or if not, the Associate Dean Research or relevant Deputy Dean. Faculty research offices advise the Researcher Development Schemes team in RIC of their Faculty Delegate and contact details of delegates are posted on the scheme website for applicants to view.
- 11.2 Important guidance to faculty delegates and selection committees:
- Committees are not requested to assess or compare the severity of disruption/s across their applicants, and the severity of a disruption should not be taken as an overriding factor;
 - This scheme is not intended for applicants who experienced disruption/s but have already demonstrably recovered their strong career trajectory (see explanation above at s7);
 - This scheme is not intended for applicants who had not demonstrated a promising research trajectory prior to disruption/s.
- 11.3 Faculty ranking committees will review and rank their applicants. Faculties are asked to provide the following information to the Central Committee Chair via the RDS team in RIC:
- Maximum overall faculty budget for co-investment in the applicable year;
 - Their ranking of applicants against the selection criteria below, with the top ranked being those for whom the proposed grant/s would be most impactful in re-establishing or uplifting their research trajectory;
 - Indication of any/all grant applications the faculty committee deemed to be as worthy of support (without reference to budget limitations, i.e. even if, in total, the list of worthy applications would be beyond the overall co-funded budget available). *This is to assist with evaluation of the scheme and understanding of the unmet need.*
- 11.4 It is recommended that the Faculty Delegate who verified applicants' disruptions (through the *Authority to Submit* process) should be part of the Faculty Committee.
- 11.5 The Faculty Delegate will be requested to meet with unsuccessful applicants to give them feedback on the outcome and explore faculty supports.
- 11.6 To support scheme evaluation, CRE may request further information from faculties about supported applicants; as such, suitable records should be maintained by faculties.