



## 2024 Melbourne Research Fellowships (Career Interruptions) *Scheme Guidelines*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Melbourne Research Fellowships (Career Interruptions) Scheme supports University of Melbourne academics who do not hold a continuing position to enhance or re-establish their research careers after experiencing a serious career interruption. This institutional scheme is a purposeful program that seeks to provide non-continuing academic staff with supported research-focused time to redress any disadvantages caused by career interruption/s. Fellowships under this scheme are awarded to academic staff with a record of achievement and promise in their research career prior to the interruption/s occurring, who can show that the fellowship will assist them to regain the career trajectory that was anticipated.

1.2 Each Melbourne Research Fellowship is a 12-month appointment with salary funding up to the value of \$120,000 (on-costs inclusive), co-contributed equally by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (DVCR) strategic funding and the host Faculty. Each Fellow is also awarded with \$20,000 for their research project costs, which is wholly funded by DVCR strategic funding.

### 2 OBJECTIVES

2.1 The Melbourne Research Fellowships (Career Interruptions) (MRF-CI) scheme has the following objectives:

- To enhance Melbourne Research Fellows' competitiveness for academic employment, and strengthen their track record for research funding opportunities by enabling supportive conditions to further generate research momentum and offset some of the impacts of the earlier career interruption/s;
- To allow Melbourne Research Fellows to have an intensive period to focus full-time on their research, by funding replacement of their teaching and administrative duties as negotiated with the host Faculty;
- To foster and create the conditions to bring to fruition to existing programs and initiate new programs of work and build partnerships and networks; and/or
- For Research-Only applicants, to allow Melbourne Research Fellows to have focused time to work on their own research, writing and scholarship.

### 3 APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

3.1 Eligibility requirements:

- a) Applicants must be salaried academics at the University of Melbourne who do not hold a continuing appointment, who are:
  - i. Staff on fixed-term appointments or
  - ii. Continuing research contingent appointments;
- b) Applicants must have been awarded a PhD degree in their field three to ten years prior to the

application closing date (for 2024 applicants: between 4 May 2013 and 4 May 2020).<sup>1</sup>

- c) Applicants must be able to show evidence of high achievement and promise in research prior to the career interruption/s, and show the impact of the interruption on their career trajectory.
  - d) Applicants must demonstrate a serious career disruption/interruption resulting from any or all of the following;
    - i. Caring responsibilities (including primary sustained care for dependent family member/s);
    - ii. Serious/chronic physical injury, illness, or mental illness.
  - e) Applicants must be Australian citizens or permanent residents.
- 3.2 The effects of the serious career interruption may have been exacerbated or compounded by COVID-19 or pandemic-related disturbances, but COVID-19 and related challenges are not in themselves taken to be a serious career interruption under this scheme due to their universality.
- 3.3 Applicants who have received a research fellowship or similar award since the interruption occurred are not eligible for award in the MRF-CI scheme, on the basis that their academic career is already progressing and/or re-established.

### **Eligibility exemption requests**

- 3.4 In addition to the eligibility requirements above, an Eligibility Exemption Request (EER) may be submitted to obtain eligibility through exemption request if:
- a) The applicant was awarded their PhD prior to 4 May 2013 but has experienced exceptional extenuating circumstances.
  - b) The applicant is a casual staff member but has been employed by the University of Melbourne for 12 months or more at the time of application (this may include multiple 'back-to-back' contracts totaling 12 months or more).
  - c) The applicant can show other exceptional circumstances and has been advised by the Researcher Development Schemes (RDS) team in Research, Innovation and Commercialisation (RIC) to submit an EER.
- 3.5 If submitting an EER, applicants must make a compelling justification for the eligibility exemption at *Part C* of the application form. Submission of an EER does not guarantee an exemption and is at the determination of the Melbourne Research Fellowships EER Committee chaired by the DVCR's delegate.

Questions about eligibility should be directed to RIC at [res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au).

## **4 APPLICATION PREPARATION**

- 4.1 Prospective applicants must discuss their application with the prospective host Head of Department or equivalent. Applications will only be considered where there is evidence of support from the Head of Department, including confirmation of co-investment of salary funding from the Faculty. Prospective applicants are encouraged to contact the relevant Faculty contact well before

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<sup>1</sup> The date of the award is the date of the official notification letter. For those applicants attending institutions where no such letter is provided, equivalent evidence that they have graduated or have completed all the required steps to be eligible to graduate with a PhD must be provided on request.

the closing date for applications.

- 4.2 Applications to this scheme consist of two parts:
  - i. Application form, completed and submitted via the University's SmartyGrants platform.
  - ii. Up to two academic referee report/s, provided directly to RIC in confidence (template provided on the scheme website).
- 4.3 All application documents and attachments must be written in English and comply strictly with the format and submission requirements.
- 4.4 All sections of the application must be completed or marked as *not applicable*. The application must contain all the information necessary for assessment of the project without the need for explanation or reference to further documentation or reference to external sources.
- 4.5 As applications are reviewed by a multi-disciplinary committee, applicants should ensure that their application, including the project description, is clearly written and accessible to an expert in another discipline.
- 4.6 If identifying themselves as 'primary caregiver' in the application, applicants must provide an articulation of their caring duties as primary caregiver with reference to their specific circumstances.

## 5 APPLICATION PROCESS

- 5.1 Prospective applicants must contact their Faculty's research office to ensure any specific requirements have been met. Details for Faculty contacts can be found on the [RIC webpage](#).
- 5.2 Applicants must enter their application into Themis via the Grant Submissions Workbench. The status of the Themis submission must be '*Submitted to Research Office*' by the closing date. For guidance, please see [the 'Understand Themis proposals workbench' online resource](#).
- 5.3 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 Selection Committee.
- 5.4 Applicants must ask their referee/s to complete the Fellowships Referee Report Template and request that their completed report is also submitted as a single PDF file via email by the application due date:

Email: [res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au)

Subject: 2024 MRF Referee Report – *APPLICANT SURNAME*

## 6 RESEARCH PROJECT - BUDGET ITEMS

- 6.1 Research budget items supported under the Fellowship:

Items that directly support the research program may be funded, including:

- a) Specialised personnel.
- b) Equipment and maintenance.
- c) Travel.
- d) Other (as approved on request to Chancellery via RIC).

## 6.2 Research budget items not supported under the Fellowship:

- a) Fees for international students or Higher Education Contribution Scheme or Higher Education Loan Program liabilities.
- b) Funding for 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 University staff through Faculties, such as desktop computers or laptops;
- f) Salaries for research collaborator(s). This does not include salaries for research support staff or technical support staff.
- g) Article Processing Charges, Chapter Processing Charges or Book Processing Charges (APCs, CPCs or BPCs – sometimes called open access fees) to make a work openly accessible where the University already has an institutional subscription to the journal (hybrid journals) or Read and Publish agreements with the publisher. 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 are also encouraged to take advantage of the University's Read and Publish agreements. Applicants should contact their local liaison librarians for further advice.
- h) Society membership fees.
- i) Visa or relocation expenses.

## 7 SELECTION CRITERIA

7.1 In their application, applicants should answer the selection criteria that will be applied by the Selection Committee, being:

- a) The demonstrated nature and extent of the career interruption(s), including evidence of the calculation of the length of interruption, in the context of the objectives of this scheme.  
(If the applicant does not wish to disclose the nature of a medical issue, written confirmation of serious career interruption can be provided by a medical practitioner).
- b) The track record of the applicant, relative to opportunity.
- c) The likelihood that the fellowship will enable the applicant to re-establish or enhance their career and improve their research track record substantially to compete more effectively for academic employment.
- d) The appropriateness of the proposed use of the fellowship to be successful in significantly enhancing the research career of the applicant.

- e) The level of support for the application from the Head of Department, including:
- i. matched salary funding;
  - ii. the provisions (employment and professional support) that the Department has made for the applicant;
  - iii. the overall workload the Fellow would carry during the term of the Fellowship;
  - iv. the potential of the applicant to make a significant contribution to the academic life of the host Department.

## 8 EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 Applications will be assessed by a University Selection Committee comprising senior members of the University research community and chaired by a delegate of the DVCR, ordinarily the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Capability). Decisions of the Selection Committee will be based on the merits of each application's strengths in relation to demonstration of their career trajectory and how the Fellowship will enable the applicant to resume that trajectory.
- 8.2 The assessment process and application documentation are confidential. However, the Chair of the Selection Committee reserves the right to discuss applications, on a strictly confidential basis, with Deans, Associate Deans (Research), Heads of Department and Centre Directors, or other senior colleagues as necessary.

## 9 FUNDING CONDITIONS

- 9.1 Each Melbourne Research Fellowship is a 12-month position with salary funding up to the value of \$120,000 (on-costs inclusive), co-contributed equally by DVCR strategic funding and the host Faculty. Each Fellow is also awarded \$20,000 for their research project costs, which is wholly funded by DVCR strategic funding.
- 9.2 Applicants who are awarded and accept an internal or external fellowship, or similar funding for salary costs, after applying to this Scheme will no longer be eligible to hold the Melbourne Research Fellowship (Career Interruptions). Applicants who are awarded research projects costs are still eligible to hold the Melbourne Research Fellowship (Career Interruptions).
- 9.3 Awarded Melbourne Research Fellows are not permitted to undertake additional outside employment while on the Fellowship, and Fellows should not be expected to undertake teaching during this period of focused research (as per the scheme objectives).

### **Fellowships – appointment and variations**

- 9.4 Fellowship offers must be accepted in writing by the Fellow and their Head of Department (or equivalent).
- 9.5 Melbourne Research Fellows will report to the Head of Department (or nominee) in their host Faculty.
- 9.6 Melbourne Research Fellowships can only be held by salaried staff of the University of Melbourne who are employed in any of the University of Melbourne's Faculties/Departments or in the

Melbourne Business School for the full duration of their fellowship appointment.

- 9.7 Requests to vary the Fellowship may be made post-award and must be documented, submitted to RIC and approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Capability).
- 9.8 The default work pattern for Melbourne Research Fellows is 1.0 FTE (i.e. up to one year). Requests for part-time appointment, where the host Faculty indicates approval, will be considered on case-by-case basis through request to Chancellery via RIC, and will be assessed in line with scheme objectives and the University's workplace policies and entitlements. Requests to vary the Fellowship time fraction for the purpose of taking on additional employment will not normally be considered.
- 9.9 If taking up the Fellowship part-time, unless exceptional circumstances apply, the Fellowship can only have a maximum duration of two years, with 0.5 FTE as the minimum time fraction for the Fellowship.
- 9.10 Melbourne Research Fellowships will normally commence after 1 January 2024 and no later than 30 June 2024. The Head of Department must approve the Fellow's commencement date within this range. Deferral of commencement past 30 June 2024 will not normally be approved, unless exceptional circumstances apply and Chancellery has approved.

### **Funding requirements**

- 9.11 Fellowships awarded under this scheme are not to be used as fractional top-up funds to an existing appointment.
- 9.12 Applicants who are awarded, and accept, an internal or external fellowship (or similar funding for salary costs) after applying to this scheme will not be eligible to hold a Melbourne Research Fellowship. However, applicants who are awarded research projects costs after applying to this scheme will remain eligible to hold the Melbourne Research Fellowship.
- 9.13 Fellowship funds may not be used to fund a legal entitlement to severance or separation payments.

### **Resources and supports during Melbourne Research Fellowship**

- 9.14 Upon commencement of the Fellowship, the supervisor or Head of School/Department will, in consultation with the Fellow, appoint a mentor for the duration of the fellowship. The relevant Associate Dean Research will be the default mentor.
- 9.15 Each Melbourne Research Fellow will also receive up to an additional \$20,000 for travel or research project costs (as outlined elsewhere in these guidelines).

### **Final report and financial acquittal report**

- 9.16 In addition to satisfactorily participating in the University's Academic Performance Development, Melbourne Research Fellows are required to submit a Final Report within six months of completing their Fellowship, and will include a financial acquittal. A copy of the Final Report is to be forwarded

to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Capability) and summaries of funded activities and the report may be published. The Final Report template is available on the Researcher Development Schemes website. The Host Department is also required to provide a short paragraph in the Final Report, which outlines how the resources were expended, the benefits the Fellow has brought to the Department, benefits of the mentorship, and any possible improvements to the Melbourne Research Fellowships (Career Interruption) Scheme.

## 10 TIMETABLE

Friday, 5 May 2023	Release of Guidelines; applications open
3pm Tuesday 13 June 2023	Applications close. Referee reports due to RIC
June 2023	Melbourne Research Fellowships (Career Interruptions) Committee meet to assess applications
July 2023	Outcomes released
Jan 2024	Funding will be transferred to the host department
January–June 2024	Fellowships commence.

## 11 ADMINISTRATIVE CONTACT

All administrative enquiries should be directed to [res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:res-devschemes@unimelb.edu.au).