

Early Career Researcher (ECR) Development

Internal Grant Scheme Funding Guidelines

1. Governing Policy

These guidelines are governed by the Australian Catholic University Research and Enterprise Funding Policy.

2. Overview

The ECR Internal Grant Scheme, administered by the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, (Research and Enterprise) is designed to support the University's Research and Enterprise strategy of achieving sustainable research excellence. This competitively assessed initiative seeks to develop future capability and capacity within the research ecosystem by offering eligible staff research funding of up to \$20,000 in total for projects of a duration of up to two (2) years.

The initiative aims to:

- i. Support early career researchers who demonstrate emerging research excellence to progress their research careers;
- ii. Provide early career researchers with experience in preparing a grant application for peer review;
- iii. Build early career researchers' track record in order to enhance competitiveness in bidding for external research funds;
- iv. Prioritise mission-aligned and impactful research and enterprise activities;
- v. Promote interdisciplinary research and collaboration across ACU's schools, research centres, and research institutes.

3. Definition of ECR

In alignment with the Australian Research Council, an ECR is a researcher who has been conferred a PhD in the 5 years preceding the application closing date. Recognising that career interruptions can have a significant impact on career progression, eligible interruptions will be taken into account up to a combined duration of 8 years. Personal career interruptions should be fully documented by the applicant with evidence where appropriate and may include:

- a. parental leave or primary care of a dependent child;
- b. carer's responsibilities;
- c. disability;
- d. disaster management and recovery (including impacts of pandemic);
- e. medical conditions;
- f. disruption due to relocation for international post-doctoral studies; and/or unemployment or non-research employment (not exceeding three years);

- g. limited or no access to facilities and resources; and
- h. Non-research positions (not concurrent with research employment).

4. Eligibility criteria:

Applicants must meet the following criteria to be eligible to apply for this initiative:

- i. meet the definition of an ECR as outlined above;
- ii. be employed on a continuing or fixed-term basis at a minimum 0.4FTE. Fixed-term applicants must be employed on a contract that extends to the end of the grant scheme reporting timeline;
- iii. have identified a suitable senior academic mentor who is an ACU active researcher (see [Research Active Definition](#)); and
- iv. demonstrate that they have the time and basic infrastructure resources to pursue the proposed activities within the context of existing research, teaching, and higher degree supervision responsibilities.

Note: Research-only (RO) staff whose salary is sourced from an externally funded project must demonstrate that the nature of their appointment means that they are allowed, and have the time available, to pursue additional research activities

5. Application Requirements and Submission

Applications must provide:

- i. A project research description not exceeding four pages (excluding 1 page references and iii below);
- ii. a letter of agreement from the intended mentor;
- iii. a letter from Head of School/Institute Director confirming support for the proposed program (including approval of any absences from normal duties and/or workload allocation);
- iv. an appropriate budget;
- v. proposed outcomes, including any ERA eligible outputs;
- vi. details of existing and previous internal funding (e.g. RSP, RAWAS), where applicable; and
- vii. a current list of ERA eligible research outputs from ORION.

Applications must be submitted via Orion by the advertised closing date. Late applications will not be accepted.

6. Use of Funds

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

- a. Personnel;
- b. Specialist equipment;

- c. Maintenance;
- d. Field work and associated costs, including travel and accommodation costs, and childcare costs where a child or dependent needs to travel with their parent in order for the research to be undertaken;
- e. Conference travel and attendance;
- f. Other.

Funds will not be provided for the following purposes:

- a. Chief investigator salaries and/or oncosts;
- b. Fees for international students or Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) or Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) liabilities;
- c. Staff seeking funding for their own postgraduate studies;
- d. Costs not directly related to research or the project;
- e. Funds that duplicate another current internal University grant, external grant or research contract;
- f. Non-specialist equipment available readily to staff, such as desktop computers;
- g. Salaries for research collaborator(s). This does not include salaries for research support staff or technical support staff; and
- h. Article Processing Charges (APC) to make a work openly accessible where the University already has an institutional subscription to the journal (hybrid journals).

7. Selection Process

The Early Career Researcher Development Selection Committee, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise (or nominee), will make the final assessment and selection of successful projects. The Selection Committee reserves the right to discuss applications with Executive Deans, Associate Deans (Research), or other senior colleagues, and reserves the right to seek further information from applicants before making a final recommendation.

Applications will be assessed based on:

- i. The quality and academic merit of the proposed research including the extent to which the project is soundly conceived and planned and aligned to ACU's mission and Research and Enterprise Plan;
- ii. 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;
- iii. Quality of the research track record of the applicant(s) relative to opportunity; and
- iv. The project feasibility including the timelines, budget (justification and appropriateness), skills and experience and other time commitments of the proposed investigator.

In awarding funding, the University will give priority to

- i. applicants who have not previously received competitively assessed research funding (internal or external).
- ii. Applications that include collaboration across disciplines or within Schools, Institutes and Centres

Applicants will be advised of application outcomes in writing within one month of the closing date.

The Selection Committee will determine the final amount awarded to each successful project.

All offers of funding must be accepted in writing.

8. Reporting

Funded research with a duration exceeding one year is subject to submission of an annual progress report against milestones and outcomes. The progress report is due 12 months after the project start date and should be submitted to res.development@acu.edu.au.

All funding recipients must submit a final report within 30 days of the completion of the project. This includes research of one year duration.

Successful applicants are expected to provide appropriate acknowledgement of University support when communicating project outcomes.