Central Research Grant Scheme Guidelines 2013

For Funding Commencing in 2014
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VICTORIA UNIVERSITY CENTRAL RESEARCH GRANT SCHEME

Introduction

1.1 The Victoria University Central Research Grants Scheme (CRGS) supports researchers at all levels of experience who require seed funding to pursue research objectives, which will form the foundation for which substantial external research support will be sought. For 2014, the total budget amount for this scheme will be $450,000.

1.2 To ensure adequate support for Victoria University Early Career Researchers (ECRs), 30% of the scheme’s funding will be dedicated to ECR led projects.

1.3 One project will be dedicated to a VU Indigenous researcher where the project is of benefit to Indigenous people/individuals/families and/or communities.

1.4 The scheme is administered by the Office for Research in conjunction with the University’s Colleges.

2 Objectives

The objectives of the Central Research Grants Scheme (CRGS) are to:

- support pilot projects which have clear potential to form the basis of a larger study, for which external research funding will be applied for within 12 months after the end of the pilot study;
- encourage collaborative research in a team with the guidance of an experienced researcher for ECR applicants;
- encourage research collaborations with industry, government, other academic institutions and/or the community;
- encourage novel collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches to applied and basic research problems;
- fund projects with demonstrable and innovative research outcomes;
- fund projects that align with Victoria University’s Research Plan specifically, interdisciplinary research in the following thematic areas: Education, Lifelong Learning & Workforce Development; Health, Active Living & Sport; Environmental Sustainability; Cultural Diversity; and the Performance and Well-being of Particular Places and Industries.
3 Research Definition

For the purpose of these guidelines Research may be defined as:

- creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humanity, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications;
- any activity classified as research which is characterised by originality; which
- has investigation as a primary objective and the potential to produce results that are sufficiently general for humanity's stock of knowledge (theoretical and/or practical) to be recognisably increased. Most higher education research work would qualify as research; pure basic research, strategic basic research, applied research and experimental development.

4 Funding

4.1 Grants will be awarded to a maximum value of $30,000. Grants below $5,000 will not be awarded. Only exceptional applications with clear justified budgets will receive funding at the upper end of the range.

4.2 Funding must be for a specific research project with aims that are clearly achievable within one calendar year.

5 Eligibility

5.1 Chief Investigator Eligibility Criteria

5.1.1 Applicants can be researchers from all levels; 30% of the scheme's funding will be allocated to ECR led applications.

5.1.2 To be considered as an ECR application the first named applicant must be an ECR.

5.1.3 Higher Education applicants must hold a salaried academic appointment of at least 0.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) at Victoria University. Vocational Education/Further Education Teachers and Senior Educators who hold an appointment of at least 0.5 FTE are also encouraged to apply.
5.1.4 Applicants must occupy a continuing or tenured position at Victoria University or be employed on a contract of not less than 3 years duration not expiring earlier than December 2014 unless their College Dean is prepared to provide written assurance that the contract will be renewed to meet this requirement. The letter from the Dean must accompany the application.

5.1.5 Applicants should normally hold a PhD at the time of application.

5.2 Early Career Researcher
An Early Career Researcher (ECR) is defined as an academic staff member in his/her first five years of uninterrupted academic or research-related employment following completion of their postgraduate training. Specifically, to be eligible for this funding scheme, ECR means a researcher who has been identified on the CRGS Application Form as having a PhD awarded on or after 18 October 2008.

For ECR applicants, significant career interruptions will be taken into account: maternity or parental leave, carer’s responsibility, illness, international post doctoral studies, or non-research employment, including unemployment.

The case for career interruption, in no more than one page, must accompany the application.

5.3 Indigenous Researcher
An Indigenous Researcher is defined as an academic staff member who is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, meaning

- a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent,
- who identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin and
- who is accepted as such by the community with which the person associates.

5.4 Mentor Investigator
All applications under the ECR category must have a Mentor Investigator (MI) second named on their application.
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY CENTRAL RESEARCH GRANT SCHEME

5.4.1 The MI should be a senior researcher, normally at Level C or above, with demonstrated research achievement as evidenced by refereed research publications and externally funded research projects. The mentor’s role is to:
  ▪ Monitor the ECR’s research project regularly (i.e. fortnightly) to discuss interim results and plans for next steps;
  ▪ Support the ECR’s research and general progress throughout the 12 months

5.4.2 Mentor Investigators need to have significant experience in managing research project(s) and:
  Provide evidence that they have successfully completed a research project(s).

5.4.3 Can be external to Victoria University.

5.4.4 The Mentor Investigator’s research expertise and experience should align with the project and project team.

5.5 Other Eligibility Requirements

5.5.1 ECR applications should demonstrate that mentors have the time within the context of existing research, teaching and higher degree supervision responsibilities to mentor the CI(s) appropriately.

5.5.2 Staff who are employed with funds from external research grants can apply but must:
  ▪ demonstrate that the work on the CRGS will not breach the funding rules of the external research grant under which they are employed
  ▪ obtain agreement to conduct their personal research project from the lead Chief Investigator of the grant on which they are employed. This confirmation must accompany the application;
  ▪ demonstrate that the proposed CRGS project is clearly different from the grant on which the applicant is employed.
5.5.3 All Chief Investigators should demonstrate in their application that they have the time and basic infrastructure to pursue the project concerned, within the context of their existing research, teaching and higher degree supervision responsibilities.

5.5.4 Staff who do not fit the eligibility criteria, but believe they can make a strong argument for why they should be considered for funding in the context of the objectives of the scheme can make a one-page, special case in writing to the Office for Research prior to preparing the application. Please send this document to zana.stefanovski@vu.edu.au

5.6 Partner Investigator

Researchers external to Victoria University who are providing significant intellectual input and relevant expertise to the project must be listed as Partner Investigators. To be eligible to participate as a Partner Investigator, a researcher must:

- demonstrate significant intellectual leadership or input into the proposed project; and
- provide the University with evidence of approval from his/her employing organisation for participation in the project; and
- have the time and capacity to make a serious commitment to the project. The University deems as appropriate a minimum of two days, out of twenty-one working days per month available for all research project activities, for each named Chief/Partner Investigator in addition to his/her commitment to activities in the organisation from which s/he predominantly draws his/her salary.

The level of cash and/or in-kind commitment of the Partner Investigator contribution will be taken into consideration by the Committee.

- There may be occasions when a Partner Investigator may be nominated from within the wider VU Community to contribute to the project (in-kind only). However, a case for their involvement must be made in writing to the Office for Research, and permission gained, prior to the preparation of the application. Please send this document to zana.stefanovski@vu.edu.au
5.7 Partner Organisation
Organisations external to VU who are eligible to be part of this application are those who:

- demonstrate significant input into the project through time and capacity
- indicate a significant contribution of funds or other resources towards the project
- provide the University with evidence of their commitment

5.8 Associate Investigator Eligibility Criteria

- Associate Investigators may be included where they contribute specific expertise but have a minor overall role in the proposed project.
- Can be external to Victoria University.

6 Limitations & Exclusion Criteria

6.1 Applications will not be accepted from staff where they are seeking support from this scheme for their own postgraduate research project.

6.2 Applicants with outstanding internal grant final reports, as at the closing date for applications are ineligible.

6.3 Previous VURDGS recipients who have not applied for external research funding, as per the conditions of the grant, are ineligible.

6.4 Individuals who hold honorary and visiting appointments with Victoria University or who do not meet the conditions for eligibility outlined above are not eligible to apply as Chief Investigators.

6.5 Applications which request funds to supplement another current internal University/external grant or research contract will be excluded from consideration. If an applicant already holds a small grant in a related area, the onus is on the applicant to provide sufficient information to assure the CRGS Panel that the grant is not being used to “top up” another existing grant.
6.6 Applicants who are successful in obtaining CRGS funding for 2014 and who subsequently win an external Australian Competitive Grant for funding in 2014 will be able to hold both awards, unless it is for the same project and providing time is available and the grants conditions allow the holding of more than one award.

6.1 Ineligible Areas of Investigation or Types of Work
The CRGS does not support the following:

- Production of teaching materials, even though some research may be involved in their production;
- Compilation of data, unless an integral part of the project proposal, in which case applicants must provide a statement indicating the research objectives to which the data would contribute;
- Development of research aids and tools (including computer programs), unless they form an integral part of the project proposal, in which case applicants must provide a statement indicating the research objectives to which these activities would contribute.
- Scholarly investigations which, while important in themselves, do not lead to conceptual advances or discoveries, or to novel practical outcomes or applications. This includes Projects such as uncritical bibliographical compilations and purely descriptive catalogues or editions that do not involve original research.
- The Applicant's own PhD project.

7 Application Process

7.1 Application Form
Applications for the CRGS must be made on the appropriate form - available from the Office for Research website.

If submitting a collaborative grant, the application must include a signed statement from the external partner (s) that includes the partner's financial, in-kind and other commitment.
7.2 Limit on Number of Applications Per Round
Chief Investigators can submit only ONE application in a round (as first named investigator) and can be listed as a subsequent investigator on a maximum of two applications. Mentor Investigators may be listed on a maximum of two applications.

7.3 Project Budget

7.3.1. Budget Development
The application must include an accurate, eligible and justified budget. Requests must be grouped under the headings: “Personnel”, “Equipment,” “Maintenance,” “Travel” and “Other”. Items should be costed at prices that will apply in 2014.

- **Personnel**
  Applicant salaries or time release cannot be requested. Where funding is requested for staff, the salary scales and on-costs current within the University should be used. Salary scales are available from [http://intranet.vu.edu.au/hr/Salaries.asp](http://intranet.vu.edu.au/hr/Salaries.asp)
  On costs of 30% must be added to each personnel item request.

- **Equipment**
  Researchers should plan to use existing equipment wherever possible. The Committee will fund the purchase of equipment costing more than $1,000 only in exceptional cases and where the item of equipment is considered essential for the project and strong justification for its acquisition provided.

- **Maintenance (individual items less than $1,000)**
  Maintenance includes items of equipment costing less than $1,000, consumables, sets of printed material and microfilm and computing, postage, stationery, etc.

- **Travel and Accommodation**
  Only travel directly related to the project will be considered. Travel to attend conferences will not be supported.

- **Other**
  Any other expenditure, including facility time/access charges.
Applicants should avoid devising an “ambit claim” budget in the expectation that the Committee will cut it down to a realistic level. The Committee will recommend funding projects at what they deem to be an appropriate level to allow the project to be undertaken and completed in an efficient and effective manner.

7.3.2. Priorities
Each budget item must be given a priority ranking indicating its importance to the successful completion of the project. Two categories should be used:
A: essential for the project to be completed in a timely fashion; or
B: necessary to maintain a reasonable rate of progress in bringing the project to completion.

7.4 Closing Date
Applications for the Victoria University Central Research Grant Scheme must be received at the Office for Research by 4.00 P.M. ON FRIDAY 18 OCTOBER 2013.

TO ENSURE EQUITY FOR ALL APPLICANTS, SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED AFTER THIS TIME WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Applicants will be required to electronically submit ONE complete signed PDF copy (one attachment only) to zana.stefanovski@vu.edu.au

Please see Appendix 1 2013 Timelines for Submission

8 Evaluation and Assessment
8.1 Assessment Process
8.1.1. Four CRGS Panels will be established to assess the applications on a competitive basis in accordance with the objectives of the Scheme and the assessment criteria (see 8.2).

The Panels will be discipline based, as follows:
- Arts and Education
- Business, and Law & Justice
- Engineering and Science
- Health & Biomedicine and Sport & Exercise Science
The Panel composition will include:

- the College Research and Research Training Directors relevant to each discipline of the Panel and wherever possible
- a representative for the mid-career researcher cohort
- an ECR representative
- a representative from the Moondani Balluk Academic Unit to provide feedback on the projects led by Indigenous Researchers and/or Indigenous research

A member from the Office for Research will also be in attendance. The Panel Chair position will be appointed by the PVC Research and Research Training.

8.1.2. A Panel member cannot be an applicant for a grant that is to be considered by the Panel. Where a College Research Director is an applicant for a grant they will withdraw from all considerations of the Panel and nominate to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training) for approval, an alternative College Representative.

8.1.3. The Panels will assess applications prior to consideration by the CRGS Committee, appointed and chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training).

8.1.4. Panel Rankings will be forwarded to the CRGS Committee who will be responsible for determining the grants to be awarded.

8.1.5. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training) and members of the CRGS Committee reserve the right to discuss applications, on a confidential basis, with College Deans, College Research Directors, Institute Directors, Centre Directors or other senior colleagues and Office for Research staff.

8.2 Assessment Criteria

8.2.1 Excellence is the primary criterion for the award of a grant, both in terms of the project and the track record of all listed Chief, Mentor, Partner and Associate Investigators relative to opportunity.
The following overall weightings will apply:

- Project: 50% (See 8.2.2)
- Research Track Record: 50% (See 8.2.4)

8.2.2 Project Assessment

Assessment of each application by a Discipline Panel and the CRGS Committee will have regard to:

a) Feasibility: the extent to which the project is feasible given the timelines and budget, and the skills, experience and time commitment of the investigators.

b) Project Innovation and Significance (20%): the extent to which the project has the capacity to generate novel findings and substantial outcomes including an important discovery or innovation or the solution of an important practical problem; or, as appropriate, contribute economic or social benefit to Australia. Consideration will also be given to a significant development of research linkages with external industry/commercial/community organisations;

c) Project Quality (20%): a professionally prepared, well written application, with a sound methodology, an appropriate mix of skills, and a well justified, appropriate budget which is comprehensible to readers outside the applicant’s discipline. Any additional funding provided external to the application will be well regarded here.

d) Alignment with Research Plan (10%): how does the project align with Victoria University’s Plan specifically, interdisciplinary research in the following thematic areas: Education, Lifelong Learning & Workforce Development; Health, Active Living & Sport; Environmental Sustainability; Cultural Diversity; and the performance and well-being of particular places and industries. Refer to the Victoria University Research Plan and the Priority FOR codes published on the Office for Research webpage.
8.2.3 Scoring System for Project

When assessing project applications, a ranking score between 0 – 5 will be applied for each of criteria b), c), d)

0 – deficient
1 – marginal
2 – average
3 – above average
4 – superior
5 – outstanding

Criteria a) Feasibility will be assessed as 'Yes' or 'No'. An assessment of 'No' will eliminate the application from further consideration.

8.2.4 Research Track Record Assessment

Assessment of each researcher track record by a Discipline Panel and the CRGS Committee will have regard to:

Outputs (20%)

- Recent research activities and achievements
- Publications
- Other outputs including research funding, reports

Skills/ experience/networks relevant to the project (20%)

- Project management
- Training/Experience relevant to project
- Networks of external collaborators and community/industry links (if relevant)

Researcher Development (10%)

- How the project will contribute to the researcher(s) career development, develop publications track record and enhance their competitiveness in securing external funding in the future to support their research program (applicants must include a statement on their plans to secure funding in the future).
- The development of new collaborations and the enhancement of existing collaborations are also considered here.
Research track record is to be assessed relative to opportunity.

For ECR led applications:

- Is any special case attached (e.g., interrupted career, recent graduate, change in direction) properly made?
  - Is recent progress (e.g., recent publications, emerging track record) emphasised (rather than just giving a hard-luck story)?

8.2.5 Feedback
Applicants who are unsuccessful will be invited, via the Office for Research, Senior Officer, Research Funding to meet with the College Panel Chair or a nominated Panel member for feedback.

8.3 Appeals
Appeals will be heard only against process issues and not against evaluative decisions of the Panel or CRGS Committee, or ratings or comments of the assessors. An applicant may appeal only where there is clear evidence that the process followed has contravened the Guidelines.

Appeals must be lodged, in writing addressed to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training), through the Office for Research, within 28 days of the date on the letter of notification of application outcome. Appeals by other parties on behalf of an applicant will not be considered. Appeals must clearly state the procedural issue on which the appeal is based.

9 Conditions of Award

9.1 Length of Grant
Central Research Grants are provided for a 12 month period. Extensions of a maximum of 3 months will only be awarded in exceptional circumstances and will only be considered when applied for on the appropriate template. In most cases, all monies unspent at end of the twelve months will be recovered.
9.2 Final Report
CRGS recipients are required to provide a final report on the funded project, including grants awarded, grants applied for and their status, conference presentations and publications; and/or details of the intended grant and publication plan for the following year. The report should be forwarded to the Office for Research and be accompanied by an evaluative commentary by the Director of the relevant Research Centre or Institute or College Research Director 3 months after the end of the project or on termination, if earlier.

9.3 Presentation of Project Results
It is expected that CRGS recipients will agree to any invitation made by the Office for Research to make a presentation on their research proposal at relevant forums, for example the VU Research Symposium.

All winning grants will be placed on the Office for Research website.

9.4 Submission of an Application for an External Grant
A clear expectation is that within a 12 month period after the pilot project has been completed:

- ECR CRGS recipients apply for an external competitive grant of at least $50,000 in value;
- Mid Career and Senior Career Researcher CRGS recipients apply for an ARC or NHMRC grant

9.5 Legal Agreement when an External Partner is Involved
Where relevant, the University may be required to enter into a research collaboration agreement with the External Partner and the project’s commencement is conditional upon the execution of this agreement.

9.6 Research Data Management
CRGS recipients must lodge an online Research Data Management Plan prior to funds being distributed. It is expected that researchers will publish meta-data describing any research data sets arising from the project and where appropriate publish the final data set. Agreement not to publish data sets or delay publication of data sets should be sought from the Director, Office for Research.

Please email zana.stefanovski@vu.edu.au for a copy of the Plan.
9.7 Change in Grant Personnel
The Office for Research must be notified in writing as soon as it is known, if there is any change in Personnel (both internal and external). If leaving the University before the CRGS project is completed, the grant recipient must inform the Office for Research at least 4 weeks prior to departure. Notice must be given in writing and a final report completed before departure.
Please email zana.stefanovski@vu.edu.au.

9.8 Failure to Comply
Failure to comply with items 9.2 – 9.7 will normally exclude a researcher from having an application to this scheme considered in future years. An excluded researcher may apply in writing to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training) for readmission to the scheme.

9.9 Membership and Nominations to Panels
- It is expected that CRGS grant recipient will make themselves available for selection as CRGS Panel members in a subsequent year.
- Mentor Investigators are able to serve CRGS Panel members but must absent themselves from consideration of any applications where they are listed as an MI.
## APPENDIX 1

### 2013 TIMELINES FOR SUBMISSION

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Action Item</th>
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| 8 July                | Announcement of the Scheme  
Advertise Purpose and opening and closing dates (Via Announcements and Research-lists email, Research Matters Bulletin) | Office for Research                              |
| No later than 16 October | Applications due to College Research Directors for approval and sign off | Applicants; College Research Directors           |
| 18 October            | Closing date for applications with the Office for Research                   | Applicants; Office for Research                   |
| 28 October to 15 November | CRGS Panels meetings to take place (4)                                       | College Directors (Chairs); Office for Research  |
| Week beginning 25 November | CRGS Committee meet and determine projects to be funded                      | PVC (R&RT); Office for Research                   |
| Week beginning 9 December | Advise University Research Committee and applicants of outcomes             | Office for Research; College Research Directors  |