OFFICE FOR RESEARCH

RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT GRANTS SCHEME

GUIDELINES 2011

Proposal for Funding
For January - December 2012
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APPENDIX

2011 Timelines for Submission

3 March 2011
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT GRANTS SCHEME

1 Introduction

1.1 The Victoria University Researcher Development Grants Scheme supports Victoria University Early Career Researchers and newly appointed staff to engage in and develop high quality research projects, with preference for teams involving ‘mentors’ and/or strong research collaborations with industry, government and/or the community, to produce research outcomes of high quality and impact. Additional benefits will be the development of an individual’s research track record, and enhanced capacity to attract additional external research income to the University.

1.2 The scheme is administered by the Office for Research in conjunction with the University’s Faculties, Centres and Institutes.

1.3 Applications will initially be assessed on a competitive basis by a Panel established by the Faculty, which would normally be chaired by the Faculty’s Associate Dean (Research and Research Training), prior to final ranking by the Grant Scheme Committee, chaired by the PVC (Research and Research Training).

2 Objectives

The Objectives of the Victoria University Researcher Development Grants Scheme are:

- to support Early Career Researchers who demonstrate clear evidence of high research capacity and newly appointed staff without research funding;
- to encourage research in a team including the guidance of an experienced researcher for ECR applicants;
- to fund projects that will enable staff to realistically compete for external research support within twelve months after the end of the project;
- to encourage productive research collaborations with industry, government, other academic institutions and/or the community;
- to develop research output that will enable high quality applications to be submitted to external grant awarding agencies;
- to encourage novel collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches to applied and basic and research problems;
- to fund projects with demonstrable and original research outcomes;
- to fund projects that align with Victoria University’s research strengths and priorities.

The Scheme does not fund consultancy projects, market research, teaching development or evaluation projects.

3 March 2011
3 Definitions

3.1 Early Career Researcher

3.1.1 Early Career Researchers (ECR) are defined as academic staff in their 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 in the Proposal as having a PhD awarded on or after 12 August 2006. This definition can also cover applicants who wish to begin a research career after a career in teaching.

3.1.2 Applicants are encouraged to work closely with established researchers or research groups and such applications will be well received. (Applications that fall under the ECR category do not require established researchers to be included as chief investigators but must include a listed mentor investigator.)

3.2 Newly Appointed Staff

3.2.1 A newly appointed academic staff member up to and including Academic Level D who otherwise meets the eligibility requirements may apply for support provided that their commencement at VU was not earlier than 2 years before the closing date for applications and that they do not hold, on application to this scheme, as a Chief Investigator, more than $10,000 of external research funding.

4 Funding

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

4.2 The Scheme is intended to support specific research projects and does not fund standard infrastructure (e.g. computers), teaching materials, publication costs or conference attendance.

4.3 Funding must be for a specific stand-alone project undertaken with aims that can be achieved within one calendar year.

4.4 Grants will be awarded for one year only.

5 Eligibility

5.1 Chief Investigator Eligibility Criteria

5.1.1 Applicants must be either an ECR or newly appointed staff member as defined in Section 3. Clarification in writing must be sought from the Office for Research, if required.

5.1.2 Applicants must hold a salaried academic appointment of at least 0.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) at Victoria University. Staff members of the TAFE Division are encouraged to apply.
5.1.3 Applicants should normally hold a PhD at the time of application. Applicants with PhD-equivalent research experience are required to make a case for exemption.

5.1.4 Applications will not be accepted from academic staff undertaking postgraduate study, where they are seeking support for their own postgraduate research project from this scheme.

5.1.5 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 2012, unless the Executive Dean of Faculty (or equivalent) is prepared to provide written assurance that the contract will be renewed to meet this requirement. Full time-staff who are employed with funds from external grants are ineligible. This includes any research grant which contains a budget for that person’s salary and/or where that person is employed to undertake a specific project, eg. A Research Associate or Assistant on an ARC grant.

5.1.6 All Chief Investigators should demonstrate in their application that they have the time and basic infrastructure resources to pursue the project concerned, within the context of existing research, teaching and higher degree supervision responsibilities.

5.1.7 Applicants holding appointments classified at Academic Level E are ineligible as sole applicants but are encouraged to team with an ECR. Academic Level D staff are eligible to apply as sole applicants only if they satisfy 3.2 but are also encouraged to team with an ECR.

5.1.8 Applicants with unsubmitted internal grant final reports as at the closing date for applications are ineligible.

5.1.9 Staff who do not fit the above criteria, but believe they can make a compelling argument as to why they should be considered for funding in the context of the objectives of the Scheme may make a one-page, special case in writing to the Faculty Associate Dean (Research and Research Training) and attach this to their application. The special case may include, but is not limited to, circumstances where a person has been at the University longer than five years but where their career has been significantly interrupted or affected by, for example, lengthy serious illness, child bearing or child rearing.

5.1.10 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.

5.2 Partner Investigator Eligibility Criteria (for collaborative projects)

Researchers and organisations 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/organisation must:
- demonstrate significant intellectual leadership or input into the proposed project; and
- demonstrate a significant contribution of funds or other resources, including his/her own salary, from his/her institution for the proposed project (having regard to the total cost of the project and the relative contribution of each Chief Investigator); 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 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 appropriateness and 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 However, a case for their involvement must be made in writing to the Office for Research, and permission gained, prior to the lodgement of the application.

5.3 Mentor Investigator Eligibility Criteria

- All applications under the ECR category must have a Mentor Investigator.
- Mentor Investigators need to have significant experience in managing research project(s).
- Provide evidence that they have successfully completed a research project(s).
- Can be external to Victoria University.
- The Mentor Investigators research expertise and experience should align with the project and project team.

5.4 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.

5.5 Limitations and Exclusion Criteria

5.5.1 Limit on Number of Applications Per Round

Chief Investigators can submit TWO applications in a round, however only ONE application will be funded. Mentor Investigators may be listed on a maximum of four applications.

Note: If a successful application is ongoing from a previous round this will be considered in the application count.

5.5.2 Relationship of the Proposal to Other Projects

5.5.2.1 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 grant in a related area, the onus is on the applicant to provide sufficient information to assure the Faculty and the Researcher Development Grant Scheme Committee that the Researcher Development grant is not being used to “top up” another existing grant.

5.5.2.2 Applicants who are successful in obtaining Researcher Development funding for 01/01/2012, and who subsequently win an external Australian competitive grant for funding in 01/01/2012, will be able to hold both awards, unless it is for the same project.
5.5.3 Ineligible Areas of Investigation or Types of Work

Victoria University Researcher Development Grants do 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.

6 Application Process

6.1 Application Form

Applications for Victoria University Researcher Development Grants must be made on the appropriate form - available from the Office for Research website. If submitting a collaborative grant, the application must include a statement from the industry/commercial/organisational partner that includes the partner's financial, in-kind and other commitment.

6.2 Project Budget

6.2.1 Construction of Budget

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.

Requests must be grouped under the headings provided “Personnel”, “Equipment,” “Maintenance,” “Travel” and “Other”. Items should be costed at prices that will apply in 2012.

- **Personnel**
  Applicant salaries or time release cannot be requested. Where funding is requested for research staffing, or technical assistance, or other staffing, 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.

### 6.2.2 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.

### 6.3 Closing Date

Applications for the Victoria University Researcher Development Grants Scheme must be received at the VU Office for Research by **4.00 P.M. ON FRIDAY, 12 AUGUST 2011**. To **ENSURE EQUITY FOR ALL APPLICANTS, SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED AFTER THIS TIME WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**. Applicants will be required to submit ONE signed original application form and attachments and 5 copies (identical to original).

### 7 Evaluation and Assessment

#### 7.1 Assessment Process

**7.1.1** Applications will in the first instance be assessed on a competitive basis by a Panel established by each Faculty, in accordance with the objectives of the Scheme and the assessment criteria (see 7.2). Applications from Victoria University Institutes and TAFE will be assigned to a faculty Panel by the Director of the Office for Research. The Panel would normally be chaired by the Faculty’s Associate Dean (Research and Research Training).

The Panel will have no less than three members who will be senior researchers. A Panel member cannot be an applicant for a grant that is to be considered by the Panel. Where an Associate Dean (Research and Research Training) 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 chairperson for the Panel.

**7.1.2** Faculties shall rank applications prior to consideration by the Researcher Development Grant Scheme Committee chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training). That Committee shall be appointed by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training) who shall consult with Deans.

*The Committee shall receive advice in writing explaining the Faculty’s assessment and ranking of each proposal.*

**7.1.3** Where an application is made by two or more researchers from different Faculties, the Associate Deans (Research and Research Training) of the relevant Faculties shall consult and provide coordinated advice to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training).

**7.1.4** The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training) and members of the Researcher...
Development Grant Scheme Committee reserve the right to discuss applications, on a confidential basis, with Deans, Associate Deans (Research and Research Training), Heads of Schools, Institute Directors, Centre Directors or other senior colleagues.

7.2 Assessment Criteria

7.2.1 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. Consideration will also be given to a significant development of research linkages with external industry/commercial/community organisations; the likelihood that the proposal will provide a real conceptual advance; lead to an important discovery or innovation or the solution of an important practical problem; or, as appropriate, contribute economic or social benefit to Australia.

7.2.2 Assessment of each application by a Faculty Research Panel and the Researcher Development Grant Scheme Committee shall 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) Researcher development: 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.

c) Project Innovation and Significance: including the significance of the project, and the extent to which the project has the capacity to generate novel findings and significant outcomes.

d) Project Quality: A professionally prepared application, with a sound methodology, an appropriate mix of skills, and a well-justified, appropriate budget. Any additional funding provided external to the application will be well regarded here.

e) Alignment with Research Strengths: how does the project align with Victoria University’s research strengths and strategic research priorities. Refer to the Research Development and Investment Strategy and the Priority FOR codes published on the Office for Research webpage.

7.2.3 Scoring System

When assessing applications, a ranking score between 0 – 5 will be applied for each of criteria b), c), d) and e) described in 7.2.2:

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.
7.3 Feedback

Applicants who are unsuccessful will be invited, via Office for Research, Grants Administration Officer, to meet with the Panel or a nominated Panel member for feedback.

7.4 Appeals

Appeals will be heard only against process issues and not against evaluative decisions of the Panel or Grant Scheme Committee, nor 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 VU 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.

8 Conditions of Award

8.1 Length of Grant

Victoria University Researcher Development Grants are normally provided for a 12 month period. In exceptional cases, an extension of time of up to three months may be granted.

8.2 Final Report

A Final Report will be required at the completion of 12 months, and submitted to the University Research Committee for consideration, or if an extension of time for three months has been granted, within 15 months of grant approval.

8.3 Presentation of Project Results

It is expected that successful applicants 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.

8.4 Submission of an application for a National Competitive Grant

An application must be submitted to an appropriate significant external funding body (eg ARC, NHMRC, VicHealth) within one year of the completion of the project.

8.5 Nominations to Panels

It is expected that applicants who have been successful in the past in obtaining a National Competitive Grant or a Victoria University Grant will make themselves available for selection as Panel members on a Panel in a subsequent year.
8.6 Research Data Management

Successful applicants must lodge a Research Data Management Plan with the Office for Research 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.

8.7 Failure to comply

Failure to comply with items 8.2, 8.3, 8.4 or 8.5 will normally exclude a researcher from having any application 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.
## APPENDIX

### 2011 TIMELINES FOR SUBMISSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Action Item</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22 March</td>
<td>&quot;Presenting the VU Researcher Development Grant Scheme for funding commencing in 2012&quot;</td>
<td>Office for Research</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Presenter: Dr Neale Yates Director, Office for Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 May</td>
<td>Advertise opening and closing dates of RDGS round (Announcements and Research-lists email, Research Matters Bulletin)</td>
<td>Office for Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 May</td>
<td>RDGS applications open; distribute application form and guideline information; update website</td>
<td>Office for Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>No later than 10 June</td>
<td>Expressions of Interest to Associate Deans (Research and Research Training) or Nominee</td>
<td>Applicants</td>
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<tr>
<td>No later than 30 June</td>
<td>Applications due to Associate Deans (R &amp;RT) for review assistance and advice</td>
<td>Applicants; Associate Deans (Research and Research Training)</td>
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<td>12 August</td>
<td>Closing date for applications with the Office for Research</td>
<td>Applicants; Office for Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 August to 9 September</td>
<td>Faculty panel meetings to take place (3)</td>
<td>Associate Deans (Chairs); Office for Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 September</td>
<td>Researcher Development Grant Scheme Committee meeting – final recommendations approved by Pro Vice Chancellor (R&amp;RT)</td>
<td>PVC (R&amp;RT); Office for Research ; Associate Deans</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 September</td>
<td>Advise Research Committee and applicants of outcomes</td>
<td>Office for Research; Associate Deans</td>
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<tr>
<td>November (date to be confirmed)</td>
<td>Research Symposium - RDGS (Jan-Dec 2010 funding round)</td>
<td>Office for Research</td>
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