

GUIDE TO THE VICE-CHANCELLOR'S RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP (VCRF)

Guidelines to be used in conjunction with Policy PL163 [hr131]: Position establishment, Recruitment, Selection and Appointment

Guideline Owner:

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1. INTENT

To outline the objectives, process for appointment, and characteristics of ECU's Vice-Chancellor's Research Fellowships Scheme.

2. ORGANISATIONAL SCOPE

All ECU staff. These Guidelines apply for VCRFs recruited in 2023 for the 2024 cohort.

3. GUIDELINES CONTENT

3.1 Objectives of the Scheme

The Vice-Chancellor's Research Fellowship (VCRF) Scheme recruits exceptional early to mid-career researchers into ECU's key areas of research activity and/or strategic priority.

The objectives of the VCRF Scheme are to:

- Grow scale and capability in ECU's existing research areas and/or strategic priority areas.
- Enhance ECU's research performance and research culture through the recruitment of exceptional early to mid-career researchers.
- Enhance the sustainability of ECU's research system through the recruitment of researchers with the potential to establish themselves as future academic leaders at ECU.
- Grow stronger links between ECU's research and teaching strengths.

3.2 Eligibility

External applicants, as well as current fixed term, casual, and ongoing ECU staff members may apply for a VCRF. Note that while internal ECU applicants are eligible to apply, strong preference will be shown for recruitment of external to ECU applicants. Appointment of ongoing ECU staff members will only happen in exceptional circumstances.

To be eligible for this Scheme, applicants must have:

- Relevant Australian working rights.
- Been awarded a PhD degree on or before the application round closing date.
- Been awarded their PhD within the last ten years, taking into consideration career breaks.
- A PhD in the relevant recruitment area for which they are applying.
- Submitted all relevant documentation for the application.

3.3 Selection Criteria

To be offered a VCRF, applicants must have:

- A strong publication track record, producing high quality research outputs with evidence of increasing independence and scholarly impact.
- Evidence of success in attracting grant funding.
- Strong connections with academic collaborators across a range of institutions, especially nationally or internationally.
- Evidence of ability to engage with research end-users such as industry, community, and government, to drive research collaborations that lead to impact from your research.
- Experience in supervising or mentoring HDR candidates and/or other research students and contributing to a team's research culture.
- Some prior experience in teaching in a university setting.

Assessment of research excellence will be made relative to the nationally benchmarked research excellence standards for the research discipline, adjusted for career stage. Applicants should be assessed with the following measures and standards when evaluating their performance against the selection criteria:

A strong publication record will be assessed by evidence of good citation performance, measured by a high Field Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI) placing them above the world average for their field. Publication in high quality journals (Q1 or above) will also be favourably considered. The applicant's publication record should show evidence of increasing independence and publications that are driven by the applicant. Esteem measures of research excellence should also be taken into consideration when assessing the quality of research outputs of the applicant, such as keynote/plenary/invited addresses at conferences or receipt of peer-nominated or competitive national/international awards and prizes. Success in Category 1 research income will be favourably considered in terms of indicating high quality research of the applicant.

Success in grant funding refers to success in attracting research income from Category 1-4 sources, as per the Higher Education Research Data Collection definitions. Evidence of attracting only internal grant funding awarded through the applicant's university is not adequate evidence of meeting this selection criteria. The applicant will be able to demonstrate that they have had a proactive and key role in securing research income through external grant funding.

Strong connections with academic collaborations will be evidenced by productive academic collaborations that have led to co-authorship of research outputs, research partnerships that have led to funding applications, or other key research-related output. Academic collaborators with strong reputation and esteem in the discipline of the relevant recruitment area will be viewed particularly favourably.

Ability to engage with research end-users to drive impact from your research will be evidenced by the applicant taking a proactive and key role in developing partnerships with relevant end-users, either led or co-led by the applicant. This will predominantly be evidenced by partnerships developed for the purposes of collaborative research projects with funders, consumers, or other end-users, but may also include the applicant's participation in advisory roles, committee, and board memberships for non-academic organisations.

Supervising or mentoring HDR candidates and/or other research students and contributing to a team's research culture should be evidenced by supervision or co-supervision of HDR candidates (at a minimum for Level C appointments), or supervision or co-supervision of Honours projects. Additional evidence of research training skills may include timeliness of HDR completions, co-publication with HDR candidates, awards and recognition received by HDR candidates during their candidature, or the post-graduation success of previously supervised students. Applicants that only have mentoring experience of HDR candidates and/or other research students may meet this selection criteria in instances where they provide a strong case demonstrating their commitment to research training. Applicants must demonstrate strong willingness and desire to contribute to a positive research culture.

Some prior experience in teaching in a university setting will be assessed by evidence that the applicant has taught at a university either as a lecturer, tutor, course coordinator, or other academic teaching position in the discipline for which they are applying for.

3.4 Nomination of recruitment areas

For the VCRF Scheme to meet its objective of growing scale and capability in ECU's existing research areas and/or strategic priority areas, and for the recruited VCRFs to be embedded in research-active teams that leverage their capability, VCRFs will be recruited into specific research areas, selected by Schools through the ADR and Executive Dean, and then shortlisted by the DVCR. The recruitment areas selected by Schools need to meet the below criteria:

- Be an existing area of research strength where other senior researchers within the School are currently working. This may be an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre, School-based Research Centre, or research group/ cluster.
- Be an area of strategic significance to the School, where the School intends for long-term research activity and growth.
- Align to the current and future teaching needs of the School, as the VCRF will have a mixed teaching/research allocation.
- An area where the School is willing to pay ongoing salary costs, including with an ongoing major research workload allocation past the initial three-year centrally-funded period. While it is up to Schools to determine the research/teaching allocation of a VCRF after the three-year funding period, it is expected that all VCRFs will retain a high research workload.

There is to be no a priori limit on how many VCRFs will be supported within a given School.

3.5 Application Process

Applications are called once every three years, contingent on funding availability from the Professors and Research Fellows Fund and will be advertised by People and Culture (PC) in accordance with the University's Position Establishment, Recruitment, Selection and Appointment Policy.

VCRF positions will be advertised through the typical advertisement channels including Times Higher Education (THE) Uni Jobs, ECU's job website, ECU's LinkedIn, and The Conversation. ECU researchers, Executive Deans, and Associate Deans (Research) will be encouraged to share the advert with their respective academic networks.

Applicants are required to submit the following documents through ECU's online application portal:

1. **Response to the selection criteria**, addressing how the applicant meets each of the advertised selection criteria (no more than three A4 pages in total).
2. **Research Statement** - applicants need to clearly address how their research fits within the preferred recruitment areas and their proposed three year research plan (no more than three A4 pages in total).
3. **Curriculum Vitae**, including details of all publications, grant funding, presentations, awards and distinctions, engagement with research end users, conferences and other evidence of professional contributions, successful supervision of higher degree by research students, and prior teaching experience.
4. **Copy of their PhD testamur**.

3.6 Assessment

The selection process is based on merit, and alignment of the applicant's research to ECU's relevant recruitment areas. Assessors will consider the applicant's performance against the selection criteria using the specified measures and standards as stipulated in Section 3.3 of these Guidelines, taking into consideration any career breaks. The assessment process will have three stages.

Stage 1: Office of the DVCR and PC exclude applications that do not need the eligibility criteria

The Office of the DVCR and PC will review all applicants against the eligibility criteria as per Section 3.2 of these Guidelines. Applicants that do not meet the basic eligibility criteria will not progress further.

Stage 2: School Shortlisting

The Office of the DVCR will provide relevant applications for each School (to the ADR and the Executive Dean). Schools will review each application against the Scheme's selection criteria and fit to the School and shortlist their top three applicants for consideration by the Selection Panel. The top three shortlisted applicants may only include one internal applicant.

Schools should organise their own interviews at this stage to ensure that shortlisted candidates they provide to the Selection Panel fit within the School's research needs and meet the discipline-specific research excellence standards of academics within their School. The interview panel for School's interview should, at a minimum, comprise of the Associate Dean (Research) and a relevant Associate Dean (Discipline).

Stage 3: Selection Panel Shortlisting and Interview

The Selection Panel will review the School's top-ranked applicants against the Selection criteria to determine which of these applicants will progress to interview. The Selection panel will then interview shortlisted applicants.

The Selection Panel will select VCRFs based primarily off quality of applicant. The specific research recruitment areas will be a secondary consideration.

The Selection Panel shall comprise:

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (Chair)
- Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor (SDVC)
- Research Professoriate Member (as nominated by the Chair)
- Chair of the Early-Mid Career Researcher Network (as nominated by the Chair)
- Existing Vice-Chancellor Research Fellow (as nominated by the Chair).

The Selection Panel shall consider diverse composition of its members and the knowledge and expertise each member brings across research recruitment areas.

The Selection Panel Chair shall have the power to co-opt up to two additional members to ensure balanced perspective, specialised knowledge, equity and gender balance.

3.7 Appointment Outcome

The Selection Panel must be satisfied that:

- The appointee/s is of the expected quality in terms of level of research achievement;
- The appointee/s meets the eligibility criteria for appointment;
- The appointee/s performs well against all selection criteria; and
- The appointee/s would further enhance the University's research culture, profile and reputation.

The Selection Panel Chair will make the final determination whether to make an offer of appointment based on the recommendation from the School, as well as taking into consideration available VCRF positions and funding. The Vice-Chancellor is to endorse the final recommended appointments from the Selection Panel.

The Selection Panel Chair reserves the right to determine the number of appointments to be made in a given round. Appointments may also be made at the discretion of the Selection Panel Chair in extenuating circumstances to further ECU's strategic and research initiatives.

3.8 Appointment Details/ Terms of Employment

The terms of employment are developed to support VCRFs in their ongoing development as well-rounded academics.

Fellowships are offered as permanent ongoing positions, with the first three years of appointment predominantly research oriented. Fellowships will be offered as full-time contracts, but may be appointed as part-time, to be negotiated with the successful appointee.

VCRFs will have 0.8FTE (or equivalent proportion for part-time Fellows) allocated to research for the first three years of their appointment. The combined teaching and service-

related component of the role within the first three years must be no more than 0.2FTE (or equivalent proportion for part-time Fellows). The teaching allocation should not involve roles requiring major course/unit coordination. Schools should only give VCRFs teaching roles that are directly linked to the research and disciplinary expertise of the appointee.

VCRFs will be supported to recruit and supervise a HDR candidate related to their research work. This support includes enrolment into ECU's Principal Supervisor Accreditation Program (PSAP) and a targeted HDR scholarship. They may also supervise other HDR candidates, but supervision of candidates outside of their research area must be done outside of their 0.8FTE research allocation.

VCRFs will initially be appointed at the base step level of Academic Salary Level B or Academic Salary Level C commensurate with their level of experience and academic performance. In addition, the University offers 17% employer-provided superannuation contribution. A higher step level at commencement is subject to negotiation between the appointee/s and Executive Dean and must be approved by the DVCR within the relevant funding proposal. A higher step may be considered appropriate by a School where a Fellow is currently occupying a position above an equivalent level, or where their track record is such that a higher step is deemed appropriate.

The standard terms and conditions applicable to the Fellowship (including commencement date) will be set out within a contract of employment and in the relevant Industrial Instrument. The relevant Industrial Instrument sets out conditions of employment, which include periodic salary increases, probation, progression, leave, superannuation, etc.

VCRFs will join a cohort of other VCRFs recruited in the same year. They will receive an introduction to research at ECU by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), and attend regular meetings coordinated by the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) to network and discuss their research. Other induction and onboarding is to occur through Schools.

Schools are to provide VCRFs with a supportive research environment in which they may conduct their research. VCRFs are to be recruited into existing areas of research activity at ECU and should be embedded within research teams that offer strong mentorship and career development opportunities. It is the responsibility of the School to ensure VCRFs are receiving quality mentorship, particularly in relation to grant writing and HDR supervision.

VCRFs must complete ECU's [Principal Supervisor Accreditation Program \(PSAP\)](#) within the first year of appointment. Appointees with teaching responsibilities will also be required to complete ECU's [PDC Learning & Teaching program](#). VCRFs must also complete ECU's Research Integrity Professional Learning (RIPL) training within the first month of starting with ECU.

Following the Fellow's three-year research-oriented Fellowship, the Fellow's research/teaching allocation will be negotiated with their relevant School of employment. It is expected that the Fellow would retain a large research workload. The Fellow is not to retain the title Vice-Chancellor's Research Fellow after the three-year Fellowship.

3.9 Funding

Appointments made through this process will receive central funding for a period of three (3) years, with the total standard funding package including:

- Salary for the preferred appointee including on costs. The Fellow's salary will be covered for three years from the day of commencement;
- \$20,000 per annum untied research support package per year for the three-year period, but which must be expended within each ECU financial reporting period and cannot be carried forward to the following year. This research support package is for the Fellow to use at their discretion;
- Funding for one PhD scholarship. The PhD stipend will be awarded at the rate and conditions of other ECU PhD scholarships to support the enrolment of a PhD candidate to work on an area directly related to the expertise and focus of the VCRF; and
- Standard relocation costs for eligible appointees. If required, successful interstate and international applicants may be eligible for appropriate standard relocation entitlements as outlined within the Relocation and Immigration Guidelines.

Any requests for funding in addition to the above-mentioned inclusions during the initial three-year appointment may be considered and provided by the relevant School. Because the appointee is expected to build on existing strengths already at ECU, it is anticipated that they will be able to use the existing research infrastructure provided within the School of appointment and will not require major investment in lab/ new equipment.

Schools are expected to pay for any additional research project costs. This may include project support for the HDR candidate, direct research start-up costs, or infrastructure costs needed to conduct their research. They are also expected to provide conference travel/incidentals support to the fellow after the initial 3-year centrally funded period.

If a Fellow is successful in obtaining an external nationally competitive or prestigious fellowship prior to or within the initial three-year appointment, central funding will provide the salary top-up to the fellowship. The Fellow will receive the amount brought in by the fellowship towards their salary costs in research support costs, to be used at their discretion on supporting the costs of their research.

Should the successful appointee leave the university during the funding period, all remaining allocations will be returned to the Professor and Research Fellowships fund for re-allocation.

Central funds will cover the 3-year salary and on-costs of the VC RF. This initial period of funding is provided on the understanding that the School will meet all salary and associated research costs after this three-year period. Extensions to salary costs from central funding past the three year period will not be entertained.

3.10 Expectations of VCRFs and Performance Review

VCRFs are expected to:

- Contribute to the research culture in their School and to participate in both School-based and university-wide activities to improve and grow research at ECU.
- Produce high quality research outputs.
- Engage with academic collaborators to share research and increase the academic reputation and profile of ECU's research.
- Apply for grants and bring in external research income.
- Develop partnerships with research end-users such as industry, community, and government, to drive research collaborations that lead to impact.
- Successfully supervise HDR candidate(s).
- Successfully conduct teaching activities, as required.

- Comply with University statutes, policies and procedures including the staff Code of Conduct and Work, Health and Safety regulations.

Upon appointment, a set of research performance key performance indicators KPIs that align to the provided expectations of VCRFs (as above) will be jointly agreed by the Fellow, the Executive Dean, and the Fellow's respective line manager; these will include plans for an increased trajectory in research outputs over the 3-year period. Schools are to conduct the Fellow's formal probation review before the end of the initial 3-years of their role.

The work performance of VCRFs will be reviewed annually in accordance with the University's performance review process and ECU's Academic Staff Performance Expectations and Outcomes (ASPEO) framework as documented in annual performance reviews. The KPIs for research performance are expected to well exceed those specified as the minimum in ASPEO and will be consistent with expectations of the discipline-specific world-class research standards across the Australian university sector.

3.11 Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

It is essential that throughout the selection and appointment process due regard is given to the University's commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging. Efforts will be made to identify applicants from a range of diversity groups with particular attention to groups, including women and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, and those under-represented in the workforce or discipline area.

3.12 Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

All proceedings relating to the nomination and appointment of staff are strictly confidential. Decisions reached by the Selection Panel and the School are confidential until formally announced through the appropriate channels.

All participants will declare and disclose with regard to confidentiality and conflict of interest to the selection panel chair.

4. ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In relation to these guidelines, the following positions are responsible for the following

Guidelines Owner – Director, People and Culture

The Guidelines Owner has overall responsibility for the content of these guidelines and its operation in ECU.

5. RELATED DOCUMENTS:

The guidelines are supported by the following:

- PL163 [hr131]: Position Establishment, Recruitment, Selection and Appointment policy
- Relevant Industrial Instrument

Other documents which are relevant to the operation of the guidelines are as follows:

- Academic Staff Performance Expectations and Outcomes (ASPEO) Framework

6. CONTACT INFORMATION

For queries relating to this document please contact:

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7. APPROVAL HISTORY

Guidelines Approved by:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Date Guidelines First Approved:	May 2019
Date last modified:	December 2023
Revision History:	
Next Revision Due:	December 2025