

ECU EARLY-MID CAREER RESEARCHER GRANT SCHEME 2024 GUIDELINES

FOR FUNDING COMMENCING
1 January 2024

CLOSING DATE: Wednesday 30 August 2023

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KEY DATES

Scheme opens	3 July 2023
Career interruption approval requests to be submitted by	24 July 2023
*EOI Submissions in ECU RMS by	31 July 2023
Research Administration Officer (RAO) review of final application	17 August 2023
Closing date	30 August 2023
Application to Assessment Panel	1 September 2023
Panel meeting	5 October 2023
Outcomes distributed	11-13 October 2023
Ethics application closing dates and HREC Committee Meeting dates	20 October 2023 for 3 November 2023 HREC meeting 17 November 2022 for 1 December 2023 HREC meeting
Funds become available	1 January 2024¹

*Failure to submit an EOI in the ECU RMS by this date will prevent submission of a full application to the grant scheme.

ABOUT

The Early-Mid Career Researcher (EMCR) Grant Scheme aims to support promising Edith Cowan University (ECU) Early-Mid Career Researchers (EMCRs) to progress their independent research careers. The scheme aims to provide EMCRs who have not previously been awarded any external competitive research grant funding with experience in applying for research funding and in undertaking and managing a research project as a lead Chief Investigator (CI).

Researchers can apply for funding to conduct a research project for up to 18 months, designed to help develop their track record and enhance their research competitiveness. The project is required to be clearly defined and with full data collection and all stated outputs achievable within the 18-month period. The CI agrees that funds allocated to Year 1 of the project will be spent by 31 December 2024 and funds allocated to Year 2 of the project will be spent by 30 June 2025, in accordance with the submitted application form, **with no exceptions or extensions to this funding.**

¹ Assuming ethics approvals are in place. If ethics approval is not in place at this time, the starting date of the funds will commence when it has been obtained, but the end date will remain unchanged. Note: delayed ethics approval will not be an acceptable reason to extend the project period.

The EMCR Grant Scheme has two funding streams:

Stream 1 Kickstart: supporting ECRs within 2 years post-PhD conferral (excluding career interruptions) and who have had **no** previous external research funding to kickstart their career with an independent research project.

Stream 2 Pilot Projects: supporting EMCRs between 2-10 years post-PhD conferral (excluding career interruptions) to undertake necessary pilot work (e.g., to generate preliminary data to support analysis plans or sample size determinations, to trial methodological approaches, to test or validate data collection tools, etc.) to underpin a strong and justified research plan/approach to be included in the submission of an externally competitive research grant application within 12 months of EMCR project completion.

Applicants who are within 2 years post-PhD conferral who have received previous non-Category 1 external research funding (including Fellowships) but have not previously held a grant under this Stream, are eligible to apply. Existing ongoing research projects will not be supported. Only proposals that already have a developed research plan that requires refinement of approaches/methods/tools or proof of feasibility will be funded, this scheme is not intended to fund scoping work.

IMPORTANT - Applications may not be assessed by experts in the applicant's field of expertise and therefore you need to ensure that the proposal can be understood by a broad audience. Limit the use of disciplinary jargon and acronyms.

The application should contain all the information necessary for an assessment of the project without the need for further information or explanation. Additional documentation must not be submitted with the application, unless specified in the EMCR Grant Guidelines or Application Form.

Any application that does not fully comply with the eligibility criteria and the guidelines provided in this document will be deemed ineligible. This includes strict adherence to word limits and submission date. Ineligible applications will not be considered by the Assessment Panel. **Late applications will not be accepted.**

SCHEME OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the EMCR Grant Scheme are to:

- Support the research and research careers of EMCRs by funding high quality research projects and pilot studies.
- Provide an opportunity for EMCRs to gain experience in developing a research proposal and leading a research project.
- Assist EMCRs to develop their track record and enhance their competitiveness for external research grants.
- Assist EMCRs to generate preliminary data leading to submission of external grant applications in 2026-2027.
- Result in definitive research outputs by the EMCR, through publication (or equivalent) and externally submitted grant applications.

SCOPE OF SCHEME

- Funding for successful applicants commences 1 January 2024 and will be awarded for a **maximum of 18 months, however funds must be expended by 31 December 2024 for Year 1 and 30 June 2025 for Year 2**. The maximum funding available for each award is **\$40,000**. It is expected that up to 10 Stream 1 Kickstart grants will be awarded and up to 10 Stream 2 Pilot Projects will be awarded.
- Applications will be accepted from individuals, not teams of researchers as Chief Investigators (CI). Individuals may name Associate Investigators (AI) who will provide expert advice and research collaboration support as part of the project (limit of 3). AIs would normally be more senior researchers with a significant research track record, especially in terms of attracting research income. A higher ranking may be given to applications with national or international collaborators named as AIs.
- Priority will be given to EMCRs who can demonstrate that success with this funding scheme will provide them with the necessary opportunity to develop their research track record and to be more competitive in their field at securing external grant funding.

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR ROLE AND ELIGIBILITY

DEFINITION: An Early-Mid Career Researcher (EMCR) is an Edith Cowan University (ECU) staff member who is currently within ten years post-PhD, allowing for career interruptions². Researchers currently enrolled in a PhD are not eligible.

This scheme is open to staff (including professional) appointed in an ongoing role, or on a contract or sessional basis. Applicants may be employed at ECU on a part-time or full-time basis. If part-time, this funding is only for research conducted at ECU and will still need to be completed within the scheme timeframe. The EMCR CI must be in a position to lead the project and have reasonable expectation of holding an appointment at ECU until 31 December 2025, or both their Executive Dean and Line Manager have **agreed to consider** contract renewal until this time³.

Specific requirements apply depending on the Stream being applied for, please see eligibility criteria below.

All CIs must take intellectual, administrative and ethical responsibility for the research project, from conception to finalisation, and the communication of project outcomes. The application should clearly indicate how this project aligns with the CI's career progression plans.

The CI must provide their ECU-linked ORCID iD, Google Scholar and Scopus ID.

To qualify, at the closing date of submission the CI must:

Stream 1 Kickstart:

² Career interruptions – see definition under 'Chief Investigator Role and Eligibility'

³ Email notification will suffice

- Must be within 2 years post-PhD, with a conferral date on or after 30 August 2021, excluding career interruptions.
- Must not have received any external research funding as first named CI.
- See below for additional eligibility criteria

Stream 2 Pilot Projects:

- Must be within 2-10 years post-PhD, with a conferral date between 30 August 2013 to 30 August 2021, excluding career interruptions.
- See below for additional eligibility criteria.

For both Streams, applicants must:

- not have been awarded an ECU ECR grant previously.
- not have held a Category 1 Australian Competitive Grant (including Fellowships) as the lead Chief Investigator (i.e., CI-A).
- have the time and basic infrastructure through their School to undertake the project, within the context of their full existing research, teaching and higher degree supervision responsibilities.
- undertake the role of project leader, with overall responsibility for all aspects of the project.
- be an ECU employee and hold an appointment until 31 December 2025, at least, or both the CI's Executive Dean and Line Manager have **agreed to consider** contract renewal until this time.
- have completed ECU's [Research Integrity Professional Learning \(RIPL\)](#) module prior to submission of the application

A maximum of **one** application per CI can be submitted in any one round of the EMCR grant scheme. Only **one** grant will be awarded per CI, per Stream, over the duration of their EMCR eligibility period. EMCR's who have been awarded an ECR grant in any of ECU's previous grant rounds are ineligible to apply in the 2023/5 round.

Substantially unchanged, unsuccessful applications that were previously submitted for funding under this scheme will be ruled **ineligible**.

The CI must disclose any related applications awarded, submitted or plans for submission to other internal or external schemes between 2022-2026.

Concurrent proposals to the EMCR scheme and external funders may be submitted provided that any funds received under the EMCR scheme are relinquished, as appropriate, on receipt of the external award.

Career Interruption

A career interruption is defined as a prolonged interruption to an applicant's capacity to work due to the following:

- pregnancy
- major illness/injury
- carer responsibilities
- maternity or parental leave
- disruption due to international relocation for post-doctoral studies or other research employment. A career interruption of not more than three months will be considered for each relocation.
- unemployment, or non-research employment

Career interruptions of less than 90 days will not be considered for the purposes of determining CI eligibility.

All career interruptions must be approved by Research Services. Where eligibility is in doubt or unclear, an eligibility ruling will be sought from the Director of Research Services. Please request approval via research-preaward@ecu.edu.au, in writing, at by Monday 24 July.

ASSOCIATE INVESTIGATORS

An Associate Investigator (AI) is defined as an investigator who provides some intellectual and/or practical input into the research and whose participation may warrant inclusion of their name on any outputs (e.g. publications). AIs would normally be more senior researchers with a significant research track record, especially in terms of attracting research income. A higher ranking may be given to applications with national or international collaborators named as AIs. A maximum of three Associate Investigators may be nominated in an application.

MENTORS

Applications **must** specify at least one ECU research mentor. It is expected that the mentor would be a senior colleague with research expertise relevant to the project who holds an ECU academic or professional appointment of 0.5 FTE or greater. It is expected that mentors will have a track record of attracting external grant funding.

Additional mentor(s) may be included, where appropriate, from industry or other research institutions.

The CI should justify their choice of mentor(s).

Mentors should provide guidance in the development of this application and if successful, provide ongoing guidance and support for the duration of the project. The Mentor should also assist the CI in the development or advancement of their research career. It is not expected that the Mentor would have a direct role in the project, or in the co-authorship of outputs arising from it.

Note: To avoid conflict of interest, if your mentor is a member of the ECU EMCR Assessment Panel this round, for example, the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) or delegate, or Associate Dean (Research), they will be unable to advocate for your application during the assessment meeting.

The application must clearly demonstrate that the EMCR CI is the real driver of the research.

BUDGET

In the budget table, include only items that are essential for the completion of the project. **Please do not include any items being supplied from other sources** (including in-kind contributions). Full justification of each item is to be included in the budget justification, not the budget table. The amounts need to be shown in Australian dollars and the total amount

to be rounded to the nearest dollar. This scheme is exempt from the University Service Charge (USC). Do not include USC in your budget.

BUDGET ITEMS SUPPORTED

ECU personnel

Salary requests for the employment of temporary personnel such as Research or Technical Assistants are permitted. Requests for personnel should include the following details:

- The official designation and level of the position (e.g., Research Assistant HEW 5.1).
- The Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) fraction (e.g., 2 days per week is 0.40 FTE).
- The total number of hours and the hourly rate for casual staff.
- Salary on-costs. On-costs are a direct cost of employing staff and include superannuation, payroll tax, worker's compensation, long service leave, annual leave and annual leave loading.

Salary requests for CIs or AIs are not permitted. Provision of teaching buyout will be considered in exceptional circumstances only and with appropriate justification.

Equipment

Equipment can include hardware and software items individually **costing \$1,000 or more**. Researchers should plan to use existing available equipment wherever possible. Indicate the cost of equipment, including any installation charges, and the names of the manufacturer and supplier. The cost of equipment and installation should be based on the latest prices that can be obtained from the supplier. The cost of leasing equipment, where this is a more cost-effective option than buying equipment, should be included. If approved for funding, all equipment purchased will remain the property of ECU. A quote should be provided for items in this category exceeding \$5,000.

Maintenance/Consumables

- Provide major headings only for consumables. A further breakdown of items and cost per item can be provided in the justification section.
- Equipment items **costing less than \$1,000**.
- Printed material where essential to the project (e.g., consent forms).

Travel

- Only economy class travel will be considered.
- All travel must be consistent with the [Edith Cowan University Travel Policy](#).
- Applicants should provide and fully justify all costs for travel, including fares and per diem allowance for accommodation and meals. Travel (e.g., flights) should be separately itemised from per diem rates. Travel destinations should be clearly marked (e.g., Melbourne to Sydney). Estimates should be based on the [Australian Tax Office reasonable travel allowances](#).

Other

Any other budget items which do not appropriately fit under the above budget headings should be included here (e.g., workshop services, purchasing data, mailing surveys, etc.). Also include in this section, expert services of a third party if the services are deemed to be

directly related to and necessary for the proposed project (e.g., transcription services, web designer, specialist technicians, expert data analysis, etc.).

BUDGET ITEMS NOT SUPPORTED

- Salaries of CIs, AIs or mentors. Teaching buyout may be allowed in exceptional circumstances only and with appropriate justification.
- Postgraduate research projects.
- Conference attendance.
- Dissemination/publication costs.
- Basic facilities, resources, and infrastructure (e.g., laboratory and office accommodation, IT, photocopying and printing, etc.) except where there is a clearly demonstrated, project-specific requirement (e.g., specialised IT requirements, printing and mailing of questionnaires, etc.).
- Capital works.
- Student stipends and fees.
- Duplication of research costs for ongoing projects.
- Research support for non-ECU investigators; and
- Shortfalls on other awards.

Please note: A School Finance Coordinator will assist with costing items for your budget. The budget must be checked and approved by the relevant School Finance Coordinator before your application is submitted.

NOTE:

- **All awarded funds must be expended by 31 December 2024 for Year 1 and 30 June 2025 for Year 2, in accordance with the original application. Project accounts will not be open until all ethics approvals are in place. Delayed ethics approval will not be an acceptable reason to extend the project period**

PROJECT RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

Describe how you are supported by your SCHOOL and/or INSTITUTE/CENTRE (successful environment, prior track record in area, mentoring, funding, collaborations, infrastructure), and UNIVERSITY (Strategic Research Funding, internal grants, grant management and ethics etc.).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT QUALITY AND INNOVATION

Aims, Background and Project Description

- Describe the key research question/questions or aims of the project. Research aim(s) describes the main purpose of your research project or the question your project will answer.
- Describe the objectives for your project. Your objectives must be clear, achievable, and directly verifiable and measurable leading to a deliverable/outcome. Research Objectives are specific measurable outcomes that contribute to achieving the research aim(s).

- Discuss the background for the project and how this is directly relevant to the project's objectives/research questions. Provide enough background information so the Assessor Panel understands what you are proposing.
 - Include information about recent international progress in the field and the relationship to the project.
 - Please refer only to refereed papers or creative arts research outputs that are widely available to national and international research communities.
 - The background should not be a discussion or uncritical compendium or list of current research (papers and funded projects) but a critical evaluation of the current body of knowledge as a framework for your argument and justification for your project. Present gaps/discrepancies in knowledge and how your research questions will address these.
- How will the proposed project contribute to a larger project? Please provide context for the challenges your overall project seeks to address.

Significance and Innovation

- Describe how the research is significant and how the overall project addresses an important problem.
- How will the collection of preliminary data, or validation of a method or tool, contribute to the overall project and its aims.?
- What contributions will the overall project make to the research field(s) - e.g., new methodology, the data, the analysis, the knowledge, more complete results, improved theory, etc.?
- Outline how the work you propose is new and unique.
- Are you improving on or proposing a new application of an existing concept, method, or intervention?

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Approach and Methods

Describe your approach to achieving your stated objectives. What are your chosen methods and analyses and why are they the most appropriate techniques for achieving your objectives? This section should also:

- Give an overview of your approach and contextualise it within current research practice.
- Describe your work plan and detail your methodology.
- What is the rationale for the chosen methods (sample size, population, procedure, time, dose, measuring instrument, etc.).
- Describe any community engagement, if any, you have undertaken to develop your research plan e.g., with end users, community groups, industry partners.
- Ensure your methodology aligns with the stated project research questions and budget justification.
- Give a timeframe including the application for any required Animal/Human Ethics and/or Safety Clearances.
- If your proposed project is a quantitative study, describe your method of analysis - how will the data be analysed once they are collected; what statistical procedures will be used to answer your research questions or to test your hypothesis.
- For qualitative studies, what interpretive framework will be used?

- Provide details of the deliverables of the project e.g., data, new protocol, policy, guidelines etc.

Feasibility

Are the aims achievable within the proposed time frame, given the skills, experience and time commitment of the Chief Investigator (and AI/Mentor team)?

Description of Personnel

Summarise the role, responsibilities and contributions of the CI and other personnel involved in the project.

Communication of Results

Outline your plans for communicating the research results/findings, including both academic and non-academic audiences. It is important to indicate specific goals of publishing in peer-reviewed academic literature and/or non-traditional outputs. It is useful to state the name of journals to be targeted and timeframes involved.

For Stream 2 applicants, this may also include applications to targeted funding bodies/schemes to further the research.

References

Include a properly formatted list of all cited references, up to a maximum of two pages. Smaller 10-point font size may be used for the references only. *Please note that this reference list is not included in the five page limit.*

TRACK RECORD, FUTURE PLANS AND DEVELOPMENT

CI's should provide a career summary outlining their achievements (relevant to this project and/or in their research career) to date. This should include contributions to the field more broadly especially leading to a translational benefit, relevant to career stage; collaborations with researchers at other universities; community engagement; professional involvement (committees, conference organisation, awards, invitations); supervision of HDR students and research staff; involvement in peer review (manuscripts and grants).

Also, provide the current Field-Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI) of each of your research publications from SciVal, where available – note this is NOT the FWCI of the journal - and indicate how they have influenced current thinking in the field of enquiry. If you require assistance with this please contact the Scholarly Communication and Collections team in the Library at researchonline@ecu.edu.au) Where more relevant to your field provide evidence of the impact of your non-traditional research outputs such as broadcasts, solo exhibitions, significant concert performances, commercial publishing, curatorial projects and policy documents.

Explain how the project fits into your longer-term research plans and will help build your research track record. How will the project develop your capacity and opportunity for an independent record of innovative, high quality research?

Describe how completion of this project will lead to the submission of an application to an external funding agency. What are the plans to attract future funding and how will this project improve your competitiveness to obtain external funding? Please specify funding bodies, schemes, and rounds for future applications. Note that there is no requirement that a future application must be submitted to the ARC or NHMRC, and serious consideration of applying to these sources should only be considered for those with exceptional research track records, relative to career stage. EMCRS are strongly encouraged to consider Category 2 and 3 sources of competitive research funding, given their higher success rate. To find out more about these opportunities refer to [Research Professional](#).

APPLICATION PROCESS

CI's must have completed an Expression of Interest (EOI) via the ECU Research Management System (ECU RMS) prior to developing their application. Once the EOI has been approved by the Associate Dean (Research), applicants can continue to develop their application.

Instructions on how to log onto the ECU RMS and create an Expression of Interest can be found at: [ECURMS Cheat Sheet Submitting an EOI](#)

For this round, EOIs must be completed by Monday 31st July 2023 in order for a full application to be considered.

Please note that the Research Administration Officer (RAO) from Research Services (see contacts on the application form) and your School Finance Coordinator will need to review the final copy of your application prior to submission. Once you have submitted your final application by the internal deadline, your RAO will coordinate the required pre-submission approval by the Associate Dean (Research) and submission, with Research Services sending you an email confirming formal submission.

Assistance with your EOI and/or the administrative aspects of your application, as well as any queries regarding the funding rules, guidelines or application form is available from your RAO research-preaward@ecu.edu.au.

APPLICATION ASSESSMENT

Applications will be assessed on a competitive basis by an Assessor Panel comprising the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) or their delegate, Associate Deans (Research) from each School, as well as an Early-Mid Career Researcher representative. Additional membership may be sourced as appropriate. On occasion, the Panel may decide that applications would benefit from assessment by an independent specialist in the field. In such cases, the application may be sent for external assessment. Applicants will be informed of this.

Consideration will be given as to whether an applicant is already in receipt of significant University funds for other, or similar, projects, particularly from the Strategic Research Fund. This may impact the amount of funds awarded if the applicant is successful.

The Panel reserves the right to adjust the level of financial support provided to successful applicants. Occasionally, the Panel will identify applications that could be funded on the provision that amendments are made. This requirement is in keeping with the developmental nature of the scheme. In such cases, the application will be returned to the CI with feedback. The CI will then have two weeks to submit a revised application. The revised application must be accompanied by a covering letter explaining the changes that have been made, in response to the feedback provided. The final assessment will then be carried out on the resubmitted application by the Committee. The invitation to resubmit is not a guarantee that a revised application will be funded.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

Project Quality and Innovation (35%)

- Does the project address an important issue?
- Are the aims and conceptual/theoretical framework original and innovative?
- Will the aims, concepts, methods and results advance knowledge within the field(s)?

Approach and Methodology (35%)

- Are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well integrated and appropriate to the aims of the project?
- Are the aims achievable within the proposed time frame, given the skills, experience and time commitment of the Chief Investigator/s (and team)?
- Is the budget appropriate and fully justified?

Researcher(s) Track Record, Future Plans and Development (30%)

- Any recognised research performance background in terms of academic record, awards or refereed publications will be considered.
- Will the project contribute to the researcher(s)' career development goals; are there clear and reasonable plans?
- Will the project outcomes enhance competitiveness in securing future external funding to support their research program?
- Will the project enhance capacity and provide the opportunity to develop the researcher(s)' track record in innovative, high-quality research?
- Are the mentoring arrangements appropriate?
- Is the CI supported by national and/or international collaborators through the Associate Investigators?

APPEALS

Appeals will only be considered against the implementation or exercise of the selection procedures. Appeals will not be considered against the merits of a decision not to fund an application, nor against any academic feedback provided to the applicant.

Applicants wishing to lodge an appeal must do so in writing to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) within two weeks of advice of the outcome of the application.

FEEDBACK

Individual feedback will be provided at time of outcome. by the applicant's School's Associate Dean (Research), if requested.

PROJECT FUNDS

A project may not begin, nor may the funds be expended, until the CI has:

- a) **accepted** the award via the ECU Research Management System; and
- b) **obtained** all required **ethics approvals** and other clearances.

Please note successful applicants will be required to complete an [ECU Data Management Plan \(DMP\)](#) as per ECU's [Research Data Management Guide](#).

The funds will be available on 1 January 2024, and the project must be completed by 30 June 2025. **All funding must be fully expended within the year stated on the application, no extensions or requests to carry forward unspent funds will be granted for this round.** Any funds not expended by 31 December 2024 for Year 1 and 30 June 2025 for Year 2 will be recovered by the University.

Expenditure on the project must be in accordance with the budget section of this document and with the aims and research plan of the project.

Any over-expenditure on the project will be the responsibility of the CI and their School or ECUSRIC.

Any significant changes to the project must be approved by the Manager, Research Administration, Research Services (research-grants@ecu.edu.au).

REPORTING

The CI is required to provide a brief written report on the outcomes to Research Services, no later than six (6) months after the completion of the project, using the report template available from the Research Services [website](#).

The CI is required to submit an external competitive research grant application(s) within 12 months of the completion of the EMCR project. Please notify Research Services at time of submission that the subsequent grant application is linked to this requirement.

Please note failure to submit the required deliverables may make the CI ineligible to apply for other ECU internal funding schemes.