ECU EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER GRANT SCHEME GUIDELINES

EXTRAORDINARY ROUND
FOR FUNDING COMMENCING
1st JULY 2019
(6 MONTH ONLY PROJECT)

CLOSING DATE: Wednesday 22nd May 2019

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DEFINITION

An Early Career Researcher (ECR) is an Edith Cowan University (ECU) staff member who is currently within their first five years of academic or other research-related employment, allowing for career interruptions[1], following completion of their postgraduate research training for a Masters Degree by Research, or Doctoral Degree, whichever was awarded most recently, based on date of conferral. Researchers currently enrolled in a Doctoral Degree are not eligible.

This scheme is open to academic and professional research staff appointed in an ongoing role, or on a contract or sessional basis. Applicants may be part-time or full-time, but if part-time, this funding in only for research conducted at ECU and will still need to be completed within the current scheme timeframe. They must be in a position to lead the project, and have reasonable expectation of holding an appointment until 31 December 2019, or their Executive Dean has agreed to consider contract renewal until this time[2].

INTRODUCTION

The Early Career Researcher (ECR) Grant Scheme supports promising Edith Cowan University (ECU) early career researchers to progress their independent research careers. Researchers can apply for funding to conduct a 6 month research project that will help develop their track record and enhance their research competitiveness. The scheme aims to provide ECU researchers with experience in applying for research funding and in undertaking and managing a research project as a lead Chief Investigator (CI). The project is required to be clearly defined and achievable within the 6 month period, and the CI agrees that funds allocated to the project will be spent by 31 December 2019, with no exceptions or extensions to this funding. If the research project is not clearly feasible for 6 month period, researchers should apply for a 12 month project. The next round of applications for 12 months projects will close in October 2019 for 2020 calendar year funding (date to be confirmed).

IMPORTANT - Applications may not be assessed by experts in the field 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 this document.

Any application that does not fully comply with the eligibility criteria and the guidelines provided in this document may be deemed ineligible. This includes strict adherence to word limits and submission date.

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[1] *Career interruptions – state clearly what the interruption was, its impact on the applicant's research career and how long the career was interrupted was for. Examples include carer responsibilities, illness, return to professional practice, but all reasonable interruptions will be considered.*
[2] *Email notification will suffice.*

SCHEME OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the ECR Grant Scheme are to:

- Support ECRs by funding high quality research projects and pilots.
- Provide an opportunity for ECRs to gain experience in developing a research proposal and leading a research project.
- Assist ECRs to develop their track record and enhance their competitiveness for external research grants.
- A specific objective of this extraordinary round is to assist ECRs to generate preliminary data for external grant applications in 2020.

SCOPE OF SCHEME

- Applications must be aligned to ECU's areas of research strengths and priorities[3].
- Funding for successful applicants commences in 1st July 2019 and will be awarded for a maximum of 6 months only. The maximum funding available for each award is **$30,000**.
- Applications are accepted from individuals or teams, however each CI must qualify as an Early Career Researcher as per the eligibility requirements.
- Priority will be given to ECRs who can demonstrate that success with this funding scheme will provide them with the necessary opportunity to develop their research track record to be more competitive in their field.

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR ROLE AND ELIGIBILITY

CI's must take intellectual, administrative and ethical responsibility for a research project, from its conception to its finalisation and the communication of its outcomes. It should be clear how this project aligns with the CI's career progression.

Each named CI must qualify as an Early Career Researcher at the time of application and provide evidence of such.

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

- have received a Masters by Research or Doctoral degree on or after 31st August 2014; or,
- have received a Masters by Research or Doctoral degree on or after 31st August 2014, together with periods of significant career interruption (between initial employment date and the closing time of submission of Proposals) which if taken into account would be commensurate with commencing on or after 31st August 2014. Career interruptions of less than one month will not be considered. The following types of interruption will be considered:
  - o carer responsibilities

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[3] *Applicants for the 2019 round can align their projects to the previous ECU research priority areas, including to school research priorities, and/or to the proposed research themes.*

- o 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
- o illness
- o maternity or parental leave; and/or
- o unemployment, or non-research employment.

- not have held a [Category 1 Grant](#) as the lead Chief Investigator;

- have the time and basic infrastructure to undertake the project, within the context of existing research, teaching and higher degree supervision responsibilities;

- take an active role in, and make a serious commitment to the project, and in the case of the lead Chief Investigator, undertake the role of project leader, with overall responsibility for all aspects of the project.

A maximum of **one** application per CI can be submitted in any one round of the ECR grant scheme.

A maximum of **two** ECR Grants can be awarded to the CI in the period of eligibility. Researchers cannot be named as a CI on concurrent grants funded under the scheme. A second grant will only be awarded subject to satisfactory progress on, or completion of, the first project. This includes the submission of the final report, and an assurance that the second project will lead to the submission of an application to an external funding agency. Please note however that if the scheme is oversubscribed, a second funding application may be given a lower priority.

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.

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

Where eligibility is in doubt or unclear, CI's must seek an eligibility ruling from the Director of ORI research-preaward@ecu.edu.au, in writing, at least four weeks prior to submission of the application.

MENTORS

Applications **must** include an ECU mentor. It is expected that the mentor would be a senior colleague with expertise relevant to the project and hold an ECU academic or professional appointment of 0.5FTE or greater. Note: if your mentor is a member of the ECU ECR Assessment panel this round (i.e. Associate Dean Research), to avoid conflict of interest they will be unable to advocate for your application during the assessment meeting.   An 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 to the project, and advice and support to assist the Chief Investigator in the development or advancement of their research career. It is not expected that the Mentor would have a role in the project.

The application must clearly demonstrate that the 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. Please also include any school/institute cash contributions. 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

Requests for personnel (excluding CI salary) should include:

- 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.

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.

Maintenance/Consumables

Maintenance costs can include:

- Consumables must include major headings only (a further breakdown of items and cost per item can be provided in the justification section);
- Equipment items costing less than $1,000 (e.g. computer software and hardware);
- Printed material.

Travel

- Only economy class travel will be considered.
- All travel must be consistent with the *Edith Cowan University Travel Policy*.

- Applicants should provide 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 should be included here, including costs for items that do not appropriately fit under the other headings (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. web designer, specialist technicians, expert data analysis).

BUDGET ITEMS NOT SUPPORTED

- Salaries of CI's;
- Postgraduate research projects;
- Teaching support/buyout
- Conference attendance
- 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;
- Shortfalls on other awards.

Please note: A School Finance Coordinator can assist with costing items for your budget. The budget should be checked by the relevant School Finance Coordinator before your application is submitted. Please liaise with your Research Administration Officer (RAO) research-preaward@ecu.edu.au to arrange this.

NOTE: All awarded funds must be expended within 6 months (before 31st December 2019).

PROJECT RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

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

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Description and Background
- Describe the rationale for the project: why is the project necessary, what challenge does your project address? What is the key ambition/outcome for your project?
- Describe the key research question/questions or proposition of the project.
- Describe the objectives for your project. Your objectives must be clear, achievable and directly verifiable and measurable leading to a deliverable/outcome.
- 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 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.

Significance and Innovation

- What significant aspects of the research problem will the project address? Describe how the research is significant and how the research addresses an important problem.
- How will the deliverables/anticipated outcomes advance the knowledge base of the discipline?
- What contributions will the project make to the research field(s) - e.g. new methodology, the data, the analysis, the knowledge, more complete results, improved theory, etc.?
- Demonstrate how the work you propose is new and unique, and how it adds to the body of knowledge in that research field.
- What is new here? The idea, the methodology, the analysis, the expected outcomes or any or all of these?
- What does this innovation mean for the research field?
- Are you improving on or proposing a new application of an existing concept, method, or intervention?

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.
- Describe (What/How/Who/When) and a justification/rationale for the chosen methods (sample size, population, procedure, time, dose, measuring instrument, etc.).
- Describe any community engagement you have undertaken to develop your research plan e.g. with end users, community groups, industry partners.

- Ensure that the methods address any potential weakness or key risk in the planned research.
- 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.
- For quantitative studies, describe your method of analysis - how will the data be analysed once they are collected; what statistical procedures will be used in order 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.

Engagement, Impact and National Benefit

Describe the expected outcomes of the proposed research and how these could maximise economic, environmental, social/cultural and/or other benefits to Australia.
Outside of academia, who would benefit from the research (who are the likely end-users e.g. individuals, government, industry, community organisations)? Why are the outcomes relevant to them? Describe how the benefits of the research could influence policy and/or practice.

What evidence will you collect to quantify and/or validate the type and extent of any possible future impact? Where appropriate, describe any commercialisation potential.

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.

Description of Personnel

Summarise the role, responsibilities and contributions of each CI and other personnel involved in the project (excluding Mentor(s)).

References

Include a properly formatted list of all cited references. 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.*

FUTURE PLANS AND DEVELOPMENT

Explain how the project fits into longer-term research plans and will build your research track record. How will the project develop capacity and opportunity for an independent record of innovative, high quality research? Stand-alone projects will not be considered.

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.

CI's who have previously held an award under this scheme must outline funding plans and provide a brief report if the previous grant was submitted to an external agency, and advise if the application was successful.

TRACK RECORD

CI's should provide a career summary outlining their achievements (relevant to this project and/or in your research career) to date. This will include: contributions to the field especially leading to a translational benefit; collaborations; community engagement; professional involvement (committees, conference organisation, awards, invitations); supervision and mentoring; involvement in peer review (manuscripts and grants) and media recognition.

Also, outline if any of your research outputs are highly cited and indicate how they have influenced current thinking in the field of enquiry. This may include broadcasts, solo exhibitions, significant concert performances, commercial publishing and curatorial projects.

SUBMISSION 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

Please note that the Research Administration Officer (RAO) from the Office of Research and Innovation (ORI) (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 deadline, your RAO will upload it to RMS and coordinate the required pre-submission approval by the Associate Dean (Research). Once approved, your RAO will coordinate submission and ORI will send you an email confirming 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.

CLOSING DATE

Applications close Wednesday 22nd May 2019

APPLICATION ASSESSMENT

Applications will be assessed on a competitive basis by a Panel chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) or their delegate, with membership including the Associate Deans of Research from each School and the Dean or representative from South-west campus. 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.

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.

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

Project Quality and Innovation (30%)
- 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 (30%)
- 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 and Future Prospects (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?

Research Benefit (10%)
- Will the project produce economic, environmental, social and/or cultural benefit or impact?
- Does the research align to ECU areas of research strength and/or priority?
- Are there adequate strategies to communicate research outcomes, including commercialisation (if appropriate)?

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.

PROJECT FUNDS

A project may not begin, nor may the funds be expended, until the CI has accepted the award via the ECU Research Management System and all required ethical and other clearances have been obtained.

Please note successful applicants will be required to complete an ECU Data Management Plan as per ECU's Research Data Management Policy.

The funds will be available in 1 July 2019, and the project must be completed by 31st December 2019. **All funding must be fully expended within the six months, no extensions or requests to carry forward unspent funds will be granted for this extraordinary round.** Any unspent funds by 31 December 2019 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.

Any significant changes to the project must be approved by the Manager of Research Operations, Office of Research & Innovation (research-grants@ecu.edu.au).

REPORTING

The CI is required to provide a brief written report on the outcomes to ORI, no later than three months after the completion of the project, using the report template available from the Office of Research & Innovation website.

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