**ECU Strategic Research Centre Application 2023**

**Funding Guidance**

## Purpose

ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres are supported by Schools and the Strategic Research Fund (SRF). This document provides guidance on funding expectations and what can and cannot be requested through SRF ECU Strategic Research Institute and Centre funding.

## Expected School co-investment

The ECU Strategic Research Institute and Centre Scheme was established to support existing high-achieving research groups at ECU to grow in scale and performance. SRF funding is intended to increase investment towards a research area by providing additional funding on top of existing School funding towards a research group. The intention of this Scheme is **not to cover existing School costs.**

Note that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) will be more willing to allocate greater SRF funding to ECU Strategic Research Centres where Schools(s) are strongly co-investing, either through in-kind, or cash contributions.

## Expected development of financial sustainability

A major purpose of SRF funding is to enable groups to become finally sustainable through attracting and leveraging additional external research income. An ECU Strategic Research Centre is expected to develop and implement plans for its financial sustainability in a way that does not just depend on SRF funding. It needs to do this by to attracting external research income to support its research endeavours.

The table below gives an example of expectations for a Centre that receives $200,000 per annum for three years from the SRF, with an additional $50,000 cash investment from their School.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 |  |
| ECU funding support | SRF funding through the ECUSRIC program | $200,000 | $200,000 | $200,000 |  |
| School cash support | $50,000 | $50,000 | $50,000 |  |
| Not acceptable scenario | External funding (minimum 3:1 ROI) | $600,000 | $600,000 | $600,000 | There has been no growth in external funding for the centre’s research program, and it continues to rely too much on SRF resources. This entity is demonstrating neither growth nor sustainability. |
| Total funding for ECUSRIC operations | $850,000 | $850,000 | $850,000 |
| % of the total contributed by the SRF | 24% | 24% | 24% |
| One possible trajectory of financial sustainability growth | External funding (the minimum ROI has grown from 3:1 to 4:1 over 3 years) | $600,000 | $700,000 | $800,000 | External income has grown, and while the SRF amount is the same in $ terms, it no longer accounts for the same % of overall funding for the entity. This entity is sustainability growing its activities by attracting more external income and using this to cover its increasing operations costs. |
| Total funding for ECUSRIC operations | $850,000 | $950,000 | $1,050,000 |
| % of the total contributed by the SRF | 24% | 21% | 19% |

## What can be requested for SRF funding:

ECU Strategic Research Institute and Centre funding from the SRF will contribute to covering the costs of items necessary to facilitate and support the conduct of research activity. This includes physical infrastructure, research personnel (eg. Research staff, salary top ups to external grants), and other items needed for entity and research conduct.

Budget items that can be requested from the SRF will depend on the structure and plans for a given ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre. Items that could be considered include those from the following list, as well as other fully justified costs, within a reasonable funding quantum. It is fully expected that most budget proposals will not request funding for everything on the list below.

***Physical infrastructure***

* Laboratory or research studio set-up costs
* Necessary equipment purchases, updates or maintenance costs
* Ongoing operations for research laboratories or studios
* Signage/banners for entity

***Research personnel***

* Director’s salary 10% leadership loading, proportionate to the FTE contribution to the entity (i.e. For a Director that contributes 0.6 FTE to the Centre, up to 60% of the 10% leadership loading will only be applied to that fractional role).
* It is generally expected that Institute/Centre Directors will hold an existing substantive appointment within the university, so their salary will not be paid from the SRF funding. Consideration to having a component of the Director’s salary fully or partially funded through the ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre SRF budget, up to the commensurate workload allocation of the Centre, will only be approved on a case-by-case basis to be negotiated between the respective Executive Dean and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research). Importantly, approval to cover the costs of the Director’s salary will only be approved in instances where specific strong entity growth and sustainable research excellence performance for the entire entity can still be assured without further SRF funding.
* Research fellow and postdoctoral research fellows (but not as a means to extend VC PRF or VC RF appointments)
* Top-ups to research salaries not fully covered by external grants
* Research assistants
* Technical and specialist support staff (e.g. IT and statistical support)
* Entity-funded HDR candidates (noting the HDR support expectations of Schools below)

***Other research conduct infrastructure***

* Research conduct costs not fully met through awarded Category 1 research project grant funding.
* Pilot project support, as a precursor to external funding applications
* Computer hardware necessary for research conduct
* Fees for access to datasets
* Photography, video and other audio-visual needs
* Publication preparation and/or submission and/or publication costs
* Software and other technical licensing
* Statistical, other research methodology and/or IT support

***Governance and operations support***

* Conference attendance fees for members and associated travel
* Other research-related travel and networking activities
* Sponsorship of relevant conferences
* Visiting research fellows
* Research administration support
* Grant writing assistance
* Costs associated with the hosting of committee and advisory board meetings
* Hiring of facilities off campus for research meetings
* Honorariums for external members of advisory board or committees
* Strategic advice to the entity (through consultancies)
* Business development roles
* External industry liaison roles
* Communications, media and external promotions, including social media, support and web-presence updates

## What cannot be requested for SRF ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre funding:

* Funding for salary top-ups for Category 1 Fellowships directly awarded to an individual based on their personal research excellence. This is already supported through the SRF, and should not be included in the SRF allocation to ECU Strategic Research Institutes of Centres.
* Laptops, mobile phones or other IT use charges
* Research workload allocation components of salaries of staff who have existing substantive appointments at ECU, including buy-out of teaching (with the exception of the Director’s salary, under specific circumstances).
* Salaries, or salary components, of people who are not working directly to further the research goals of the entity
* Salary loadings for Members, including performance-based bonuses (with the exception of Director’s 10% leadership loading).
* Teaching related activities including teaching buy-out/marking (HDR supervision is not included here)
* The construction of new buildings or other major capital works

Expected contributions from Schools:

Schools will indicate any cash and in-kind contributions they will provide to support the activities of their researchers associated with entities. Schools are expected to pay:

* Staff salaries of ongoing substantive members of the ECU Strategic Research Institute and Centre
* Facilities, laboratory space, studio space and equipment
* Administrative support (from School administrative staff)
* Cash contributions to the conduct of research, as appropriate, including co-investment in future grants as appropriate.

Schools are particularly expected to provide support for HDR students linked to ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres as set out in the ECU Strategic Research Institute and Centre Procedures. HDR students will normally be enrolled through the School of employment of their Principal Supervisor. As such, the School is expected to support:

* HDR training costs
* Facilities, laboratory space, studio space and equipment
* Research administration and support
* Access to school-based research support structures
* Any cash contributions
* International insurance
* Any other expenditure required in the during of the HDR program to facilitate completion.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For queries relating to this document please contact:

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