



Charles Sturt
University

Faculty ECR Scheme

Guidelines for funding commencing
1 February 2023

CLOSING DATE
Friday 25 November 2022

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1. Definition

An Early Career Researcher (**ECR**) is a Charles Sturt staff member who is within 5 years post research higher degree completion based on date of conferral. Allowances will be made for career interruptions of greater than one month.

2. Introduction

The Faculty ECR Scheme supports promising Charles Sturt early career researchers to progress their research careers. Researchers can apply for funding to conduct a research project that will help develop their track record and enhance their research competitiveness. The scheme aims to provide the University researchers with experience and mentorship in applying for research funding and in undertaking and managing a research project.

Applicants should bear in mind when applying that the Faculty ECR Scheme is a support scheme for researchers. Hence, successfully receiving an ECR grant is not considered a research outcome, either for inclusion in calculating a researcher's RPI score or as an outcome achieved when making a case for promotion. Rather, it is the outcomes that the Scheme will help to facilitate, such as quality publications and other outputs, external grants, and impact and engagement that determine a researcher's RPI score, and secondly are used for justifying promotion to a higher level.

3. Research and Activities Supported

The Scheme funds applications that support excellence in pure and applied or translational research undertaken across all research fields. *Pure research* involves experimental, exploratory or theoretical work undertaken to acquire new knowledge without necessarily looking for long-term application and impact other than the advancement of knowledge. *Applied research* is original work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge with the objective of a specific application. *Translational research* takes pure or applied knowledge and translates that to a particular use or population. This scheme will fund all of the above. It will not fund scholarship of teaching or professional activities.

Applications must demonstrate how their proposal meets the definition of research as part of the proposal.

4. Scheme Objectives

The objectives of the Faculty ECR Scheme are to:

- Support and provide mentorship to early career researchers who demonstrate clear evidence of high research potential to progress their research careers;
- Encourage establishment of an early career researcher's research pathway;
- Provide competitive continuation funding for high quality projects and / or pilot research projects that will lead to external grant applications;
- Provide early career researchers with experience in preparing a grant application for peer review;
- Build early career researchers' track record in producing high quality/high impact outputs in order to enhance competitiveness in bidding for external research funds;
- Provide research funding for projects that are strategically aligned with the University's FOR priority areas.

5. Funding

Funding for successful applicants commences 1 February 2023 and must be expended by 1 December 2023. The maximum funding available for each award is **\$25,000 (excl GST)**.

Funding will be allocated as follows:

- Each Faculty will nominate up to three grants in accordance with selection criteria after ranking all eligible applications
- The PVC Research and Innovation will nominate up to a further three grants to include consideration of
 - Interdisciplinary research;
 - Industry or community-driven research;
 - First Nations research; and
 - Equity and diversity

Budget items that will be supported by the grant are:

- Staff/research assistance
- Travel
- Consumables
- Minor equipment

Budget items **not** supported by the grant are:

- ECR (chief investigator) salary;
- Teaching buy out;
- Salaries of research collaborators;
- Honours and Postgraduate research projects currently funded by RPT or other scholarship arrangements;
- Publication costs (noting that recipients are eligible to apply to the standard Charles Sturt open access publication scheme)
- 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.);
- Student stipends and fees;
- Duplication of research costs for ongoing projects

Unspent funds cannot be carried forward. Any unspent funds at 31 December 2023 will be recovered by the University.

ECR funding will be provided only once per applicant. **Previously successful applicants should not apply.**

6. The Applicant

The ECR 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 their career progression, including their plans for building on the proposed pilot research to obtain external grant funding.

To qualify, at the closing date of applications, the ECR must:

- hold a salaried (fixed term or continuing) Faculty (non-Research Institute) academic appointment at Charles Sturt of at least 0.5 FTE at Level A, B or C, that continues for the duration of the grant;

- have a work function of **teaching and research**;
- have received a Masters by Research or Doctoral degree on or after 1 December 2017; or equivalent professional qualification, or,
- have received a Masters by Research or Doctoral degree, or equivalent professional qualification, conferred on or before 1 December 2017, 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 conferral on or after 1 December 2017. Career interruptions of less than one month will not be considered.
- The following types of interruption will be considered:
 - carer responsibilities
 - illness
 - maternity or parental leave; and/or
 - non-research employment.
- The applicant must demonstrate they have the time and basic infrastructure available to pursue their project within the constraints of existing teaching, research and HDR supervision responsibilities.
- Researchers currently enrolled in a Masters by Research or a Doctoral Degree are not eligible to apply.

7. The Application

Only **one** application can be submitted per ECR. Applications must be submitted to the email address: pvcric@csu.edu.au. **Late applications will not be accepted.**

Applications must adhere to page and word limits. Applications exceeding page or word limits will not be considered.

Applications **must** nominate a Charles Sturt mentor. It is expected the mentor will be an active researcher at Level C or above, with expertise relevant to the project, and hold a University academic appointment of 0.5FTE or greater. Consideration may be given for appropriate Charles Sturt Adjunct staff as mentors.

The application should justify their choice of mentor(s) providing detail on their experience relevant to the proposal project.

Mentors should provide guidance to the project both in conceptualisation and through the key phases of the project and advise and support the ECR in the development or advancement of their research career. It is not, however, a requirement for the Mentor to have a role in the project apart from providing guidance and advice. Mentors may be required to submit a separate report on their engagement with the ECR and the project as part of the formal reporting process.

8. Selection Criteria

All applications will be assessed by a Faculty Committee and the Faculty ECR Scheme Selection Panel using the following selection criteria:

a) The Quality of the Project (30%)

Significance of the project (including some consideration of the alignment with priority research areas), and the extent to which the project is soundly conceived and planned with appropriate methodological approach and outcomes.

b) Researcher Development (20%)

How the project will contribute to the researcher's career development and enhance their competitiveness in securing external funding in the future to support their research program. This includes a statement on applicant's plans to secure funding in the future.

c) External Grant Focus (20%)

How the proposed research aligns with and will provide a foundation for developing a future external grant application.

d) Feasibility (15%)

The extent to which the project is feasible given the timelines and budget, and the skills, experience and time commitment of the ECR and any collaborator(s).

e) Resources (15%)

The extent to which the budget is justified, appropriate and value for money.

Consideration will also be given to the likelihood that the research proposed will lead to:

- A contribution of economic or social benefit to Australia;
- The development of an external grant application as part of the project deliverables;
- Ongoing research collaboration with an external government organisation or industry;
- An important discovery, innovation or solution to an important practical problem

9. Application Assessment

Applications will be assessed and ranked on a competitive basis by a committee appointed within each Faculty.

The applications and ranking will then be considered by a panel chaired by the PVC Research and Innovation.

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 if this occurs.

Consideration will be given to whether an applicant previously, or is currently, in receipt of significant University funds for other, or similar, projects.

The Panel reserves the right to adjust the level of financial support provided to successful applicants as required to deliver the outcomes of the funding scheme. Justification for a reduction in budget will be provided and feasibility discussed with the applicant prior to final award in these cases.

10. Reporting

The ECR is required to provide:

- a) A progress report at after 4 months; and
- b) A final report on the outcomes, no later than two months after the completion of the project funding.

It is expected that any resultant outputs will be eligible for inclusion in future ERA assessments and should be associated with a publication in high quality journals or other demonstrable impact.

It is also expected the ECR will present a Faculty seminar or similar to showcase their work following or near completion of their research. A financial acquittal must be attached to the final report.