Central Research Grant Scheme
Including Industry Projects

Guidelines 2014

For Funding Commencing in 2015
1 Introduction

1.1 The Victoria University Central Research Grants Scheme (CRGS) supports Victoria University (VU) researchers at all levels of experience who require seed funding for innovative research to pursue objectives that will form the foundation for a project, for which substantial external research support will be sought. For 2015, the total budget amount for this scheme will be up to $450,000.

1.2 For the 2015 round, up to 50% of the funding pool will be dedicated to new projects with Industry Partners. There is a strong preference for collaborative projects with Small and Medium Businesses (SMBs).

1.3 The scheme is administered by the Office for Research in conjunction with the University’s Colleges.

2 Objectives

The objectives of the Central Research Grants Scheme (CRGS) are to:

• support pilot projects which have clear potential to form the basis of a larger study, for which external research funding will be applied for within 12 months after the end of the pilot study;
• encourage research collaborations with Industry with the aim of applying for an ARC Linkage Project after the CRGS project is completed.
• encourage collaborative research in a team with the guidance of an experienced researcher for ECR applicants;
• encourage novel collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches to applied and basic research problems;
• fund projects with demonstrable and innovative research outcomes;
• fund projects that are aligned with and contribute significantly to the advancement of knowledge in one or more of the University’s areas of research focus: http://www.vu.edu.au/research/research-focus-areas

3 Research Definition

For the purpose of these guidelines Research may be defined as:

• creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humanity, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications;
• any activity classified as research which is characterised by originality; which has investigation as a primary objective and the potential to produce results that are
sufficiently general for humanity's stock of knowledge (theoretical and/or practical) to be recognisably increased. Most higher education research work would qualify as research;

- pure basic research, strategic basic research, applied research and experimental development.

4. Industry Definition
   Industry is defined broadly to include companies, businesses, government or community. Preference will be given to collaborative new projects with SMBs.

5. Funding
   5.1 Grants will be awarded to a maximum value of $30,000 (plus the 30% Industry Partner cash contribution). Grants below $8,000 will not be awarded. Only exceptional applications with clear justified budgets will receive funding at the upper end of the range.

   5.2 Funding must be for a specific research project with aims that are clearly achievable within one calendar year.

   5.3 At least one Industry Partner must meet the eligibility requirements of ‘Partner Organisation’ as stated in the ARC Linkage Project Funding Rules, and the combined Industry Partner(s) Cash Contribution must be at least 30% per cent of the total funding requested from the CRGS scheme.

6. Eligibility
   6.1.1 Chief Investigator Eligibility Criteria
   Higher Education applicants must hold a salaried academic appointment of at least 0.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) at Victoria University. Vocational Education/Further Education Teachers and Senior Educators who hold an appointment of at least 0.5 FTE are also encouraged to apply.

   6.1.2 Applicants must occupy a continuing or tenured position at Victoria University or be employed on a contract of not less than 3 years duration, not expiring earlier than December 2015, unless their College Dean is prepared to provide written assurance that the contract will be renewed to meet this requirement. The letter from the Dean must accompany the application.
6.1.3 To be considered as an Early Career Researcher (ECR) application, the first named applicant must be an ECR.

6.1.4 Applicants should normally hold a PhD at the time of application.

6.2 Early Career Researcher
An Early Career Researcher is defined as an academic staff member in his/her first five years of uninterrupted academic or research-related employment following completion of their postgraduate training. Specifically, to be eligible for this funding scheme, ECR means a researcher who has been identified on the CRGS Application Form as having a PhD awarded on or after 17 October 2009.

For ECR applicants, significant career interruptions will be taken into account: maternity or parental leave, carer’s responsibility, illness, international postdoctoral studies, or non-research employment, including unemployment.

The case for career interruption, in no more than one page, must accompany the application.

6.3 Mentor Investigator
All applications under the ECR category must have a Mentor Investigator (MI) second named on their application.

The MI should be a senior researcher, normally at Level C or above, with demonstrated research achievement as evidenced by refereed research publications and externally funded research projects. The mentor can be external to VU.

The mentor’s role is to:

- Monitor the ECR’s research project regularly (i.e. fortnightly) to discuss interim results and plans for next steps;

- Support the ECR’s research and general progress throughout the 12 months.

Mentor Investigators need to have significant experience in managing research project(s) and:

Provide evidence that they have successfully completed a research project(s).

The Mentor Investigator’s research expertise and experience should align with the project and project team.
6.4 Other Eligibility Requirements

6.4.1 ECR applications should demonstrate that mentors have the time within the context of existing research, teaching and higher degree supervision responsibilities to mentor the CI(s) appropriately.

6.4.2 Level B/C applicants must show demonstrated ability to apply for Category 1, 2 or 3 funding within their research track record.

6.4.3 Level D/E applicants must show demonstrated ability to apply for Category 1 funding within their research track record.

6.4.4 Staff employed with funds from external research grants can apply but must:

- demonstrate that the work on the CRGS will not breach the funding rules of the external research grant under which they are employed;
- obtain agreement to conduct their personal research project from the lead Chief Investigator of the grant on which they are employed. This confirmation must accompany the application;
- demonstrate that the proposed CRGS project is clearly different from the grant on which the applicant is employed.

6.4.5 All Chief Investigators should demonstrate in their application that they have the time and basic infrastructure to pursue the project concerned, within the context of their existing research, teaching and higher degree supervision responsibilities.

6.4.6 Staff who do not fit the eligibility criteria, but believe they can make a strong argument for why they should be considered for funding in the context of the objectives of the scheme can make a one-page, special case in writing to the Office for Research prior to preparing the application. Please send this document to zana.stefanovski@vu.edu.au

6.5 Industry Partner

6.5.1 Up to 50% of the CRGS funding pool will be dedicated to new projects with Industry Partners, with a strong preference for collaborations with small and medium businesses.
6.5.2 A CRGS project can have more than one Industry Partner but at least one external partner must adhere to the Partner Organisation/Investigator eligibility as stated in the ARC Linkage Project Funding Rules http://www.arc.gov.au/ncgp/lp/lp_fundingrules.htm and the CRGS project must demonstrate that the Industry Partner(s) contributions towards the project (i.e. the total of the cash and/or in-kind contributions of the Industry Partner(s) organisation(s)) at least matches the total funding requested from the CRGS scheme, up-to $30,000, with 30% of the Industry Partner(s) contribution(s) being in cash. For example: $30,000 cash request from the CRGS must be accompanied with at least $10,000 cash contribution and $20,000 In-kind contribution from the Industry Partner(s).

6.5.3 To be eligible to participate as an Industry Partner, a researcher must also:
- demonstrate significant intellectual leadership or input into the proposed project; and
- provide the University with evidence of approval from his/her employing organisation for participation in the project; and
- have the time and capacity to make a serious commitment to the project. The University deems as appropriate a minimum of two days, out of twenty-one working days per month available for all research project activities, for each named Chief/Industry Partner in addition to his/her commitment to activities in the organisation from which s/he predominantly draws his/her salary.

6.6 Associate Investigator Eligibility Criteria
- Associate Investigators may be included where they contribute specific expertise but have a minor overall role in the proposed project.
- Can be external to Victoria University.

7. Limitations & Exclusion Criteria
7.1 Applications will not be accepted from staff where they are seeking support from this scheme for their own postgraduate research project.

7.2 Applicants with any outstanding internal grant final reports, as at the closing date for applications are ineligible.

7.3 Previous RDGS/CRGS recipients who have not applied for external research funding, as per the conditions of the grant, are ineligible.
7.4 Individuals who hold honorary and visiting appointments with Victoria University or who do not meet the conditions for eligibility outlined above are not eligible to apply as Chief Investigators.

7.5 Applications which request funds to supplement another current internal University/external grant or research contract will be excluded from consideration. If an applicant already holds a small grant in a related area, the onus is on the applicant to provide sufficient information to assure the CRGS Panel that the grant is not being used to “top up” another existing grant.

7.6 Applicants who are successful in obtaining CRGS funding for 2015 and who subsequently win an external Australian Competitive Grant for funding in 2015 will be able to hold both awards, unless it is for the same project and providing time is available and the grants conditions allow the holding of more than one award.

7.7 Ineligible Areas of Investigation or Types of Work
The CRGS does not support the following:
- Production of teaching materials, even though some research may be involved in their production;
- Compilation of data, unless an integral part of the project proposal, in which case applicants must provide a statement indicating the research objectives to which the data would contribute;
- Development of research aids and tools (including computer programs), unless they form an integral part of the project proposal, in which case applicants must provide a statement indicating the research objectives to which these activities would contribute.
- Scholarly investigations which, while important in themselves, do not lead to conceptual advances or discoveries, or to novel practical outcomes or applications. This includes Projects such as uncritical bibliographical compilations and purely descriptive catalogues or editions that do not involve original research.
- The Applicant’s own PhD project.

8. Application Process
8.1 Application Form
Applications for the CRGS must be made on the appropriate form - available from the Office for Research website.
CRGS Project applications with an Industry Partner must include a signed letter from the Industry Partner(s) that states the partner’s commitments, including cash and in-kind.
### 8.2 Limit on Number of Applications Per Round
Chief Investigators can submit only **ONE** application in a round (as first named investigator) and can be listed as a subsequent investigator on a maximum of two applications. Mentor Investigators may be listed on a maximum of two applications.

### 8.3 Project Budget
#### 8.3.1 Budget Development
The application must include an accurate, eligible and justified budget. Requests must be grouped under the headings: “Personnel”, “Equipment,” “Maintenance,” “Travel” and “Other”. Items should be costed at prices that will apply in 2015.

**CRGS Projects with an Industry Partner** must clearly indicate both the partner’s matching cash and in-kind contribution within the CRGS application form budget section (please see 6.5.2).

- **Personnel**
  Applicant salaries or time release cannot be requested. Where funding is requested for staff, the salary scales and on-costs current within the University should be used. Salary scales are available from [http://intranet.vu.edu.au/hr/Salaries.asp](http://intranet.vu.edu.au/hr/Salaries.asp)

  On costs of 30% must be added to each personnel item request.

- **Equipment**
  Researchers should plan to use existing equipment wherever possible. The Committee will fund the purchase of new equipment for this project, costing more than $1,000 only in exceptional cases. The item of equipment must be considered essential for the project and a strong justification for its acquisition provided. All equipment purchased becomes property of Victoria University.

- **Maintenance (individual items less than $1,000)**
  Maintenance includes items of equipment costing less than $1,000, consumables, sets of printed material and microfilm and computing, postage, stationery, etc.

- **Travel and Accommodation**
  Only travel directly related to the project will be considered and must be Economy Class. **Travel to attend conferences will not be supported.**

- **Other**
  Any other expenditure, including facility time/access charges.
Applicants should avoid devising an “ambit claim” budget in the expectation that the Committee will cut it down to a realistic level. Any requests for Travel will be particularly scrutinized. The Committee will recommend funding projects at what they deem to be an appropriate level to allow the project to be undertaken and completed in an efficient and effective manner.

8.4 Closing Date
Applications for the Victoria University Central Research Grant Scheme must be received at the Office for Research by **4.00 P.M. ON FRIDAY 17 OCTOBER 2014.**

TO ENSURE EQUITY FOR ALL APPLICANTS, SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED AFTER THIS TIME WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Applicants will be required to electronically submit **ONE** complete signed PDF copy (one attachment only) to **zana.stefanovski@vu.edu.au**.

Use the following file name protocol for your submission:

Surname_VUCollege_CGRG2015

Incomplete applications not in the correct format cannot be considered.

Please see **Appendix 1 2014 Timelines for Submission.**

9. Evaluation and Assessment

9.1 Assessment Process

9.1.1 **Five CRGS Panels** will be established to assess the applications, on a competitive basis, in accordance with the objectives of the Scheme and the assessment criteria (see 9.2).

The Panels will be College based and combined as follows:

- Arts and Education
- Business, and Law & Justice
- Engineering and Science
- Health & Biomedicine
- Sport & Exercise Science

The Panel composition will include:

- the College Research and Research Training Directors (or Nominee) relevant to each discipline of the Panel, and wherever possible:
- a representative for the mid-career researcher cohort
an ECR representative

- a representative from the Moondani Balluk Academic Unit to provide feedback on the projects led by Indigenous Researchers and/or Indigenous research

A member from the Office for Research will also be in attendance. The Panel Chair will usually be the College Research Director.

9.1.2 A Panel member cannot be an applicant for grant that is to be considered by the Panel. Where a College Research Director is an applicant they will withdraw from all considerations of the Panel and nominate to the OFR an alternative Panel Chair. A Mentor Investigator cannot assess an application he/she is named on.

9.1.3 The Panels will assess applications prior to consideration by the CRGS Committee, appointed and chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training).

9.1.4 Panel Rankings will be forwarded to the CRGS Committee who will be responsible for determining the grants to be awarded.

9.1.5 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training) and members of the CRGS Committee reserve the right to discuss applications, on a confidential basis, with College Deans, College Research Directors, Institute Directors, Centre Directors or other senior colleagues and Office for Research staff.

9.2 Assessment Criteria

9.2.1 Excellence is the primary criterion for the award of a grant, both in terms of the project and the track record of all listed Chief, Mentor, Associate Investigators, and Industry Partners relative to opportunity.

The following overall weightings will apply:

- Project: 50% (See 9.2.2)
- Research Track Record: 50% (See 9.2.3)

9.2.2 Project Assessment

Assessment of each application by the relevant CRGS Panel and subsequently, the CRGS Committee will have regard to:

a) Feasibility: the extent to which the project is feasible given the timelines and budget, and the skills, experience and time commitment of the investigators.
b) **Project Innovation and Significance (20%)**: the extent to which the project has the capacity to generate novel findings and substantial outcomes including an important discovery or innovation or the solution of an important practical problem; or, as appropriate, contribute economic or social benefit to Australia. For projects with an Industry Partner, consideration will be given to significant new research collaboration s– with a preference for research linkages with SMBs.

c) **Project Quality (20%)**: a professionally prepared, well written application, with a sound methodology, an appropriate mix of skills, and a well justified, appropriate budget which is comprehensible to readers outside the applicant’s discipline. Any additional funding provided external to the application will be well regarded here.

d) **Alignment with Victoria University Areas of Research Focus (10%)**: how does the project align with and contribute significantly to the advancement of knowledge in one or more of the University’s areas of research focus: [http://www.vu.edu.au/research/research-focus-areas](http://www.vu.edu.au/research/research-focus-areas)

### 9.2.3 Research Track Record Assessment

Assessment of each researcher track record by a CRGS Panel and the CRGS Committee will have regard to:

**Outputs (20%)**

- Recent research activities and achievements
- Publications
- Other outputs including research funding, reports

**Skills/ experience/networks relevant to the project (20%)**

- Project management
- Training/Experience relevant to project
- Strength and contribution of Industry Partner (if relevant)

**Researcher Development (10%)**

- How the project will contribute to the researcher(s) track record: development publications track record and enhancement of their competitiveness in securing external funding in the future to support their research program.

**Research track record is to be assessed relative to opportunity.**

For ECR led applications:
- Is any special case attached (e.g., interrupted career, recent graduate, change in direction) properly made?
- Is recent progress (e.g., recent publications, emerging track record) emphasised?

### 9.2.4 Feedback
Applicants who are unsuccessful will be invited, via the Office for Research, Senior Officer, Research Funding to meet with the College Panel Chair or a nominated Panel member for feedback.

### 9.3 Appeals
Appeals will be heard only against process issues and not against evaluative decisions of the Panel or CRGS Committee, or ratings or comments of the assessors. An applicant may appeal only where there is clear evidence that the process followed has contravened the Guidelines.

Appeals must be lodged, in writing addressed to the Director, Office for Research, within 28 days of the date on the letter of notification of application outcome. Appeals by other parties on behalf of an applicant will not be considered. Appeals must clearly state the procedural issue on which the appeal is based.

### 10 Conditions of Award

#### 10.1 Length of Grant
Central Research Grants are provided for a 12-month period. Extensions of a maximum of 3 months will only be awarded in exceptional circumstances and will only be considered when applied for on the appropriate template. In most cases, all monies unspent at end of the twelve months will be recovered.

#### 10.2 Final Report
CRGS recipients are required to provide a **final report** on the funded project, including grants awarded, grants applied for and their status, conference presentations and publications; and/or details of the intended grant and publication plan for the following year. The report should be forwarded to the Office for Research and be accompanied by an evaluative commentary by the Director of the relevant Research Centre or Institute or College Research Director 3 months after the end of the project or on termination, if earlier.
10.3 Presentation of Project Results
It is expected that CRGS recipients will agree to any invitation made by the Office for Research to make a presentation on their research proposal at relevant forums, for example the VU Research Symposium, participate as future members on a CRGS panel, and/or act as internal EOI Assessors.

All winning grants will be placed on the Office for Research website.

10.4 Submission of an Application for an External Grant
A clear expectation is that within a 12 month period after the pilot project has been completed:

- ECR CRGS recipients apply for an external competitive grant of at least $50,000 in value;
- Mid Career and Senior Career Researcher CRGS recipients apply for an ARC or NHMRC grant.
- CRGS Projects with an Industry Partner recipients apply to the ARC Linkage Project scheme.

10.5 Legal Agreement when an Industry Partner is involved
The University will be required to enter into a research collaboration agreement with the Industry Partner and the project's commencement is conditional upon the execution of this agreement.

10.6 Research Data Management
CRGS recipients must lodge an online Research Data Management Plan prior to funds being distributed. It is expected that researchers will publish meta-data describing any research data sets arising from the project and where appropriate publish the final data set. Agreement not to publish data sets or delay publication of data sets should be sought from the Director, Office for Research.

Please email zana.stefanovski@vu.edu.au for a copy of the Plan.

10.7 Changes in Grant Personnel
The Office for Research must be notified in writing as soon as it is known, if there is any change in Personnel (both internal and external). Please note a change in grant personnel especially the lead CI will need to be considered for approval. If leaving the University before the CRGS project is completed, the grant recipient must inform the Office for Research at least 4 weeks prior to departure. Notice must be given in writing and a final report completed before departure. Please email zana.stefanovski@vu.edu.au.
10.8 Changes in Approved Budget Items
Funding is to be spent according to the approved budget items. If any changes are required, a case must be made in writing for consideration. Please email zana.stefanovski@vu.edu.au.

10.9 Failure to Comply
Failure to comply with items 10.2 – 10.8 will normally exclude a researcher from applying to this scheme in future years. An excluded researcher may apply in writing to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training) to be considered for readmission to the scheme.

10.10 Membership and Nominations to Panels
It is expected that CRGS grant recipients will make themselves available for selection as CRGS Panel members in a subsequent year.
# 2014 Timelines for Submission

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Action Item</th>
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<tr>
<td>7 July</td>
<td>Announcement of the Scheme</td>
<td>Office for Research</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Advertise Purpose and opening and closing dates (Via Announcements and</td>
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<td>Research-info email list and communications via the Research Facilitation &amp;</td>
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<td>Development Managers)</td>
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<td>No later than 26</td>
<td>Applications due to College Research Directors for approval and sign off</td>
<td>Applicants; College Research Directors</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 October</td>
<td>Closing date for applications with the Office for Research</td>
<td>Applicants; Office for Research</td>
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<td>20 October to 14</td>
<td>CRGS Panel meetings to take place (5)</td>
<td>Office for Research, College Research Directors</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>CRGS Committee meet and determine projects to be funded</td>
<td>PVC (R&amp;RT); Office for Research; College Research Directors</td>
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<td>November</td>
<td>Advise University Research Committee and applicants of outcomes</td>
<td>Office for Research; College Research Directors</td>
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<td>Week beginning 8</td>
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