2015 VU RESEARCHER SUPPORT FUND: GUIDELINES

Purpose

The Researcher Support Fund (RSF) is an internal grant distributed to Colleges to support research activity. The RSF is made possible through the Joint Research Engagement (JRE) block grant allocation to the University.

The RSF must be expended in the support of research activity. Colleges are expected to distribute the RSF allocation in a manner that will support the achievement of University and College research goals and targets with a particular focus on supporting:

- staff to produce research outputs and generate research income; and
- the development of a critical mass of research within Centres and Institutes.

The JRE is a performance based research block grant awarded to the University from the Commonwealth Government. The performance-based formula for the JRE allocation is comprised of the following:

- Research income (as reported through the Higher Education Research Data Collection) weighted at 60%;
- Commonwealth-funded research student load (as reported through the Higher Education Student collection) weighted at 30%;
- Research publications (as reported through the Higher Education Research Data Collection) weighted at 10%.

Background

Financial support for research and research training is provided from external and internal sources, including researchers winning external research grants. Major sources of external support that are distributed internally to support the research and research training effort, include the three national research block grants:

- Joint Research Engagement (JRE) is distributed directly to Colleges, Research Centres and Institutes through the RSF, with the remaining allocation used to support a range of internal research grant schemes and other University strategic research initiatives;
- the Research Training Scheme (RTS) that is distributed back to Colleges specifically to support places for Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students; and
- the Sustainable Research Excellence (SRE) & Research Infrastructure Block Grant (RIBG) that is primarily distributed competitively through the VU Research Infrastructure Grant Scheme and to a lesser extent other internal research grant schemes administered through the Office for Research.

It is University policy to allocate the block grants and central University funds to both reward research performance and to support strategic initiatives.

In addition, colleges support research and research training from the funds provided from their Recurrent Operating Grants, directly and indirectly through various mechanisms including the ‘Research Active’ classification. Colleges are expected to deploy resources in support of research, including time allocation for staff to engage in research and research training activities, to support research students and to support applications for grants and awards.

Distribution

A portion of JRE funding is allocated to the RSF fund by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training). The 2015 RSF allocation is $750,000. The fund is distributed to individuals, Research Centres, Institutes and Colleges based on external research income and publications. This distribution is to encourage staff to undertake research and to assist them in this endeavour.

In 2015, the amount of the RSF pool available for the three distribution elements (staff, Colleges, Centres & Institutes) will be fixed as follows:

- College-based researcher allocation (50% of the total RSF annual allocation):
funds are distributed to college-based researchers when the total allocation for the individual exceeds the threshold of $1,000;
- Where a researchers' allocation does not reach the threshold the funds are distributed to the college.

- Research Centre and Institute allocation (20% of the total RSF annual allocation):
  - Included as a separate amount in the College RSF allocation.
- College allocation (30% of the total RSF annual allocation). Colleges may end up with an allocation in excess of 30% due to the College-based researcher allocation rules.

In the calculation of College and researcher allocations, a weighting is applied to individuals with registered VU centre or institute associations. The weighting is only applied once irrespective of the number of associations an individual may have.

Use of Funds

The RSF allocations must be expended to support research activity. Approval for expenditure will follow normal university procedures.

Eligible items of expenditure

The following are examples of what is accepted as appropriate use of RSF:

- Research reference material;
- Infrastructure costs directly related to research
- Publication support (for research publications only) – eg journal acceptance fees for open access journals.
- Research assistance
- Travel and accommodation expenses for research projects, research conferences and associated registration.
- Buy out of teaching time (additional to time release from research active status)
- Fees for any professional expertise not available among the research team
- Consumables for research projects.

Ineligible items of expenditure:

- Teaching costs and preparation of teaching material
- Any travel that is not the purpose of conducting or presenting research
- Professional development that is not related to research or research training
- Provision of basic infrastructure
- General running costs for the College

Timeline and Process for the Allocation of funds

1. The Office for Research notifies Colleges of the RSF allocation for the year.
2. Colleges will be required to submit a 2 page proposal detailing how the funds are to be used in support of the University and College research goals and targets. The proposal must include how the Centre or Institute allocations are to be used.
3. The College RSF proposal will be referred to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training) for approval.
4. Following PVC (Research and Research Training) approval, the College RSF will be transferred to the relevant College account. College Finance Officers will be required to arrange for the distribution of the allocations to researchers, where the individual allocation exceeds the $1000 threshold, Centres and Institutes.
5. A detailed statement of expenditure must be submitted to the Office for Research within 12 months.

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