MERI Research Seed Funding Scheme for Grant Development
2019 Guidelines

1. Background

1.1   Overview

The MERI Research Seed Funding Scheme for Grant Development, supports the preparation of submissions which have the potential for a larger scope within the next 2 years for applying for Category 1 – 3 research funding.

The aim is to provide seed (pilot) funding for projects.

Awardees will be expected to:
- participate in extensive peer review and mentoring
- meet internal deadlines set by the Melbourne Education Research Institute (MERI)
- provide support and feedback for applicants in future funding rounds, based on their experience
- submit a short report on use of the Seed Funding within two months of acquittal
- participate in an 'MERI Research Seed Funding Scheme for Grant Development Showcase' the following year. At the showcase, you will present your research, its outcomes, your learnings and future directions.

At the end of the mentoring and peer review process, research teams will have either: submitted their research funding application or have completed several drafts of the key components.

1.2 Funding

Proposals with budgets up to $6,000 will be considered and justification will be required to explain the expenses. These funds are to be used to facilitate pilot research and/or research activities that will increase the competitiveness of the larger funding application and future funding submissions.

Awards are for twelve months and are only available for the 2019-2020 periods. Any carry-over of funds must be made in writing to MERI. Please note extension is not guaranteed.

1.3 Assessment

Assessment is undertaken by an experienced panel from within the Melbourne Graduate School of Education.

Assessors will be asked to consider applications against the following criteria:
- Outcomes and benefits, including relevance to MGSE and university research strengths
- Research merit, significance and originality of project
- Appropriate and realistic planning, methodology and scope
- Team roles, including inclusion of researchers with diverse experience
- Track record of the investigators, relative to opportunities

Successful Applicants will be expected to engage with regular meetings with the MERI Review team, meet funding timelines, and will be provided with face-to face and written feedback.

1.4 Collaboration

Projects may involve collaboration with researchers outside MGSE, such as academics from other faculties within UoM. Collaborating organisations may be Australian or international, higher education institutions, and government or business organisations.

1.5 Institution transfers

These grants cannot be transferred to another institution.

2. Team Roles

2.1 Overview

Teams may include the following roles:
- Chief Investigator
- Partner Investigator
- Research Assistant or Research Fellow
- Mentor
- Graduate Research student – Please note changes to guidelines

2.2 Chief Investigator (CI)

A CI will be a named investigator on the funding application and should therefore take account of issues such as eligibility, employment at an Australian university, research track record relative to opportunity and specific role within the proposed project. An application must include at least one CI from MGSE. A CI is a researcher who:
- is an academic staff member at MGSE
- has a research track record that will make them competitive for the nominated funding scheme
- will be eligible for the nominated funding scheme at the time of application

- takes substantial intellectual and management responsibility for the proposal development and the overall project
- does not receive any funds directly from the project grant for salary
- if a CI is currently undertaking a GR, careful consideration should be given to their time commitment on the proposed project to ensure their Doctoral work is not compromised.

2.3 Partner Investigator (PI)

A PI will also be a named investigator on the funding application and may be an industry partner or an academic from an international university. A PI is a researcher who:
- is ineligible to apply as a Chief Investigator according to the nominated scheme guidelines (e.g. because he/she is not an academic staff member at an eligible Australian institution or is from overseas)
- has specialist expertise to contribute to the project
- secures appropriate contribution of time and operating costs from his/her organisation for the proposed research project
- does not receive any funds directly from the project grant for salary.

2.4 Research Assistant (RA), Research Fellow (RF)

An RA/RF will be significantly involved in the development of the funding application and may be building a track record for future grant competitiveness or seeking hands on experience with grant writing. An RA/RFis a researcher who:
- is usually in the early or mid-stage of their research career
- may not have the appropriate track record for a CI role
- may be ineligible to apply as a CI according to the nominated scheme guidelines (e.g. due to employment conditions)
- will provide significant intellectual and/or development assistance for the preparation of the proposal
- may consider taking a research fellow role in the project if funding is successful.

2.5 Mentor (M)

A mentor will be a senior academic from within MGSE, or another area of the University of Melbourne, who is not taking a CI role in the proposed project. External mentors may also be nominated where relevant. The mentor will provide peer review and strategic guidance during and after the application process. A mentor is a researcher who:
- has an advanced research career at an academic institution or has highly specialist skills relevant to the proposal
- has had experience with developing and accessing large research funding proposals has committed to reviewing the proposal during the application stage
- may consider a role on an advisory committee within the project governance structure, if the proposal is successful.

2.6 Graduate Research student (GR)

A GR student will be a doctoral student involved in the development of the application and also potentially involved in research activities if the proposal is successful. A GR role involves a researcher who:

- is currently enrolled in a higher degree by research at the University of Melbourne
- can demonstrate a clear link to the project proposal through their GR topic
- will assist in the preparation of the proposal
- may consider a role in the project as a research assistant or fellow if the proposal is successful.

The inclusion of a GR student is encouraged; however, it should be noted that the MGSE Seed Funding should not be considered a financial supplement to aid completion.

- Additionally, a GR student named on an application needs to carefully consider how their time commitment on the proposed project will be managed to ensure their Doctoral work is not compromised. Please note as part of eligibility, MERI will check candidature status to ensure proposed GR students are not at risk

3. How to Apply

3.1 Application form

Applicants for the Seed Funding scheme must complete an application form outlining the proposed title, summary, team and research idea. Applications will be assessed by a panel convened by MERI based on the selection criteria outlined in the guidelines. Unsuccessful applicants will be provided with feedback on increasing their competitiveness for future internal funding rounds.

3.2 Submission

Applications must be submitted via SmartyGrants to Melbourne Education Research Institute (MERI), by **Sunday 30 June 2019.** Should you have any queries, please contact mgse-grants@unimelb.edu.au

4. Budget

4.1 Overview

Proposals must provide a detailed budget not exceeding $6000 and budget justification. Budget must be used to:

- assist with research funding submission preparation/coordination
- assist with piloting focused aspects of research
- promote collaboration within the team and with key external advisors (e.g. Partner Organisations)

In the application form for Research Seed Funding, the budget should justify expenditure under these separate headings:

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- Personnel
- Equipment
- Maintenance
- Travel

4.2 Personnel

Chief Investigators' and Partner Investigators' salaries are not funded through this grant.
Salaries for specific positions must be based on **current University of Melbourne rates** (please refer to calculators at (https://staff.unimelb.edu.au/finance-purchasing-travel/salary-costing-tools).   The University salary on-costs must be included; however, infrastructure overheads (or indirect costs) should not be included.

Requests for teaching relief will be considered where a panel is convinced that this is essential for the research and successful outcome of the project. Costs should be based upon the specific tasks for which relief is required (e.g. lecturing, marking, and student consultation) and the time involved.

4.3 Equipment

Essential minor items of equipment may be requested if costs are itemised, based on quotes or consultation with MGSE IT staff. Applicants will need to fully justify equipment requests.

Items of equipment which normally would be purchased through MGSE activities or other resources should not be included.

4.4 Maintenance

Include in this category consumables directly related to the project and in excess of standard university supplies.

4.5 Travel

Travel funds may be requested for:

- Fieldwork for preliminary data collection to assist in piloting the research
- Visits to use the holdings of libraries, archives or the facilities of laboratories

Travel requests should provide an estimate of all travel costs, including airfares. Use Australian Tax Office travel reimbursement rates where applicable for per diems and accommodation. Estimates can be used but should be based on the most likely destinations for travel.

Travel to and attendance at conferences is **not an eligible item of expenditure** in this scheme.
If funds are being requested for an international visitor, the application should carefully argue how the benefits of the research will flow to the University of Melbourne rather than to the visitor's host institution.

5. Eligibility

5.1 Chief Investigators

Seed Funding applications must include at least one CI employed within MGSE at 0.5FTE Level A6 or above on a continuing basis or contract until at least 31st December 2020. CIs should have the support of their Centre Director (for research centres) and/or Research Domain Coordinator for the application.

5.2 Limit per researcher

Only one seed funding application per year will be accepted from each researcher named as a first Chief Investigator. However, researchers may be listed on multiple applications in other roles, if there is a substantial and realistic commitment to the nominated role.

5.3 Eligibility for funding scheme

All CIs and PIs must also be eligible for the nominated funding scheme. For example, for Australian Research Council (ARC) schemes, there are specific requirements for these roles, particularly in relation to employment. Please refer to the relevant funding rules for more detail. Chief Investigators should not have any direct or financial interest in any collaborating business organisation. Graduate Researchers need to demonstrate evidence of their progress to date.

5.4 Research only staff

Full-time research staff whose salaries in 2019/20 will be wholly paid from an Australian Research Council grant or another external source are eligible to apply but must attach to their application a separate statement on how their time commitment to this project can be made within their current workload and their conditions of employment (including any restrictions specified by an external funding body).

5.5 Research proposals

The content and structure of Seed Funding proposals should align with the nominated funding scheme and take note of any exclusion within the funding rules, including preparation of teaching materials, compilations of existing work, program development and other university business that may be outside the Australian government definition of research activity.

5.6 Collaboration

CIs from other areas of the University of Melbourne or other universities may be nominated as part of the Seed Funding proposal. Where this will improve the competitiveness and feasibility of the funding application, collaboration is strongly encouraged.

5.7 Fellowships

Applications for individual fellowship funding such as the ARC Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) or the Future Fellowship scheme are encouraged to apply for this funding.

6. Expenditure of Seed Funding and Reporting

6.1 Reporting Requirements

A report of no more than one page must be provided to the Review Panel outlining the work undertaken during the Seed Funding period with a breakdown of funding expenditure and project outcomes. This should be provided within **two months of final proposal submission** (e.g. to the ARC) or 1 year from award of funds. MERI will provide a template for this report.

6.2 Expenditure of funds

All Seed funds must be spent by the time the project is submitted to the relevant research funding scheme or from one year of award. However, if the application is not able to be submitted in the round indicated on the application form, a request for the carry-over of funds to the following year can be made in writing to the Director (MERI) and is at the discretion of the Review Panel.

If funds are unspent, staff are not able to apply for support for the same or different project in the next round.

If funds are unspent and/or it is not feasible to submit the proposal to the funding body, staff can elect to return the funds to MERI and reapply for funding in a later round.

7. Timeline

Scheme Opens	Friday 24 May
Applications Due	Sunday 30 June
Panel Ranking Meeting/Outcomes	July 2019