

Macquarie University Postgraduate Research Fund (PGRF)

FUNDING GUIDELINES

PURPOSE

The Postgraduate Research Fund (PGRF) provides competitive awards of up to AU\$6,000 per student for activities that add value to a research project, such as a trip for a conference presentation or visit to a laboratory.

The primary goals of the PGRF are:

- to add value to the research thesis,
- to enhance the graduate research experience, and
- to provide research students with experience in the grant writing process.

FUNDING GUIDELINES

Eligibility

- Research students are eligible for the PGRF if, at the application closing date:
 - they are enrolled in a full or part-time PhD or Master of Philosophy (MPhil) degree.
 - they have not submitted their thesis for examination.
 - they have not exceeded 2.5 full-time equivalent years for PhD and 1.5 years for MPhil.
- Research students outside the candidature time parameters listed above may submit a special case argument for eligibility as part of the PGRF application but will normally have lower priority in the allocation of funds.
- Master of Research (MRes) students are not eligible to apply for the PGRF.
- PGRF applications relating to a conference/other research activity, which is scheduled after the student's Expected Work Submission (EWS) date will not be considered.

General

- PGRF applications are accepted biannually and are considered on a **competitive** basis, considering factors such as the quality of the application and the potential for the proposed activity to add value to the student's thesis or enhance their research experience.
- The maximum value of a PGRF grant is **AU\$6,000**.
- Funds from Round 1 in any year are for activities between January 1 and June 30 of that year. Funds for Round 2 cover activities between July 1 and December 31.
- In exceptional circumstances, funding will be provided for activities that fall outside of the funding period. Examples of this might be:
 - a conference spanning the start or end date of the funding period (e.g., from June 29 to July 2).
 - a conference only announced after PGRF applications have closed for the relevant round. This should be rare, as applying for PGRF should be part of a student's long-term planning.

- If a student has applied to give a presentation at a conference, they should not wait for final acceptance of their proposal before applying for PGRF funding. This is to ensure they do not miss the application period for the round covering the conference dates.
- A student may normally hold only one PGRF award during the life of their research degree. However, if a student is unable to use their PGRF award due to circumstances beyond their control, they may seek approval from the Academic Director, Graduate Research to re-apply in a subsequent round.

Eligible types of expenditure

- Applications may be made to cover the following costs:

Conference travel

- Attendance at a national or international conference, including registration fees, travel, and accommodation, only where the applicant has had a paper or poster presentation accepted.
- Official confirmation of the acceptance of the student's paper/poster, or an invitation to the student to present at a conference, should be included with the application. Where such evidence is not available at the time of application, it must be submitted to the relevant department/school team as soon as it is received. Travel will not be booked without this documentation.

Supplementary Research Costs

- Supplementary research costs refer to costs incurred in pursuing new or additional aspects of the research project.
- These costs might include community consultation costs, production of creative works, supplementary fieldwork, supplementary visits to off-campus libraries or archives, visits to research laboratories with the intention of acquiring additional research skills or purchase of small items of equipment not normally supplied by the department or school.

Primary carer costs:

- Applicants with primary carer responsibilities can include in their budget extraordinary carer costs they may need to cover to complete their PGRF activity. Applications should include details of why particular costs are necessary.
- Expenses covered by the PGRF must be supplementary to those covered by department/school or faculty funding. Basic research expenses necessary for the completion of a student's research project will **not** be funded by the PGRF. Host departments/schools are required to meet the basic research and infrastructure costs incurred by their research students, e.g., lab equipment, laptop computers, fieldwork, photocopying, postage, and other day-to-day project costs.
- Costs associated with thesis production and research publication are not covered by the PGRF.
- Grants are for individual students; applications submitted on behalf of larger research projects or groups are ineligible.
- Retrospective requests for support will not be considered under any circumstances. For the purposes of this scheme, a 'retrospective request' is defined as a request made for funds that have been spent or committed before the closing date of the current round.

Supervisor involvement

- The principal supervisor must be involved in the preparation of the application to assist their student in developing grant application skills.
- In addition to overseeing the preparation of the application, the principal supervisor must complete the 'Supervisor's Report' form and submit it, independently of the associated application, by the relevant application closing date.
- Supervisors are asked to report on the progress of the thesis project and comment on why a PGRF grant would enhance that project. This information is critical to the assessment of an application.
- The applicant should ensure their supervisor is aware of the requirements outlined above.
- Applications for which no 'Supervisor's Report' form is received by the closing date will be ineligible.

Budget preparation and justification

- A comprehensive budget is essential. There are two basic principles that must be used in determining and justifying budgets: (1) full and accurate costing of budget items, and (2) a clear explanation of the reasons for all proposed expenditure in relation to the research plan.
- Applicants must explain why each item of expenditure is essential in relation to the application, and why the amount requested is appropriate. All relevant evidence for costings should be attached.
- The activity for which the funds are requested must be fully costed, even if the total exceeds the maximum amount of the award. If this occurs, the applicant must state how the additional expenses will be covered, for example, through external project or travel grants. In exceptional circumstances, the applicant may consider supplementing the PGRF award with their own funds, but this is not encouraged.

Ethics

- Successful applicants whose projects require ethical and/or biosafety clearance will not gain access to awarded funds until they have provided the GRA (gr.pgrf@mq.edu.au) with a copy of the relevant clearance letter.

Travel

- All travel funded by the University must be in accordance with the University's [Travel Policy](#) and [Travel Procedure](#).
- Bookings must not be made until after the funds are approved.
- A University Corporate Travel Insurance policy is in place to provide cover for all travellers travelling on official University business. For further information refer to the University's [Insurable Risk Policy](#).

Expenditure of funds

- Administration of the funds, including reimbursements, payment of airfares, etc., is handled via the student's department/school.
- Departments/schools are responsible for recording and monitoring expenditure, which will be subject to the usual University policies, financial checks, procedures, and audits.

- Funding cannot be released prior to the grant commencement date. If payment is required for conference registration, airfares or other time-restricted expenses prior to the grant commencement date, the student should consult with the relevant staff member in their department/school.
- Funding must be expended within the six-month grant period of the relevant round and prior to thesis submission.
- Any unspent funds at the close of the funding period or at thesis submission, whichever comes first, will be automatically recouped by the University.

Variations

- Funds granted must not be spent for purposes other than those detailed in the original application budget without prior approval from the Academic Director, Graduate Research. Requests to vary approved activities, including dropping or changing site visits, must be made in writing via the PGRF Variation form. This is required even if there is no change in the total budget.
- Where an activity variation results in a change to how the approved budget will be spent, a revised budget (and justification) must be submitted with the PGRF Variation form.
- If a student has been awarded the maximum grant amount, no further funding will be made available. Where expected costs increase beyond the maximum grant amount, students are advised to consult with the relevant staff member in their department/school.
- In circumstances where a student has not received the maximum grant amount of \$6000 AUD, and expected costs for approved activities increase after the grant is awarded, a variation request for additional funding up to the maximum grant amount of \$6000 AUD may be submitted via the PGRF Variation form. These requests will be assessed by the Academic Director, Graduate Research on a case-by-case basis and will be subject to the availability of funding.

APPLICATION PROCESS

- All forms and information for the PGRF can be found [here](#).
- Applications must be submitted via the prescribed Microsoft Form. Word lengths must be observed. Failure to conform to guidelines may make an application ineligible.
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the application includes the necessary documents and approvals.
- The application and supporting documentation must be sent to gr.pgrf@mq.edu.au by the relevant deadline. A maximum of two files can be submitted – the application form and collated supporting documents. Multiple files will be returned to the applicant for consolidation.

Supervisor Report

The Supervisor Report is also completed via a Microsoft Form. Once your supervisor submits the form, it will be sent directly to the Graduate Research Academy. Please ensure you check in with your supervisor as the report must also be submitted by the relevant deadline.

ASSESSMENT OF PGRF APPLICATIONS

Applications are assessed by a panel convened by the relevant faculty, which includes a representative from outside of the faculty. Applications will be assessed according to the following criteria, as appropriate:

1. How the project adds value to the thesis by:
 - Allowing the student to present their research findings and receive quality feedback in a way that will potentially improve the final thesis; and/or
 - Allowing the student to supplement fieldwork by gathering extra data, relevant but not indispensable to the project; and/or
 - Providing the student with relevant skills that will assist with the final completion of the thesis.
2. How the project enhances the postgraduate research experience by:
 - Providing the student with experiences that aid their professional development; and/or
 - Allowing the student to develop research networks; and/or
 - Equipping the student with valuable and relevant skills; and/or
 - Allowing the student to become familiar with a key research institution.
3. The quality and professionalism of the PGRF application:
 - The application is accessible to a non-specialist audience
 - The value and scope of the research project is clearly defined
 - The proposed activity and its relationship to the research project is fully and clearly explained
 - The budget is clearly presented and fully justified
 - The application contains all necessary information and documentation.
4. How the application shows alignment with the [Macquarie University Research Strategy 2035](#).
5. The appropriateness of timing of the activity in relation to candidature progress.

NOTIFICATION OF OUTCOMES

- Successful applicants will receive a 'Letter of Offer', detailing their award, and an 'Acceptance of Offer' (AOO) form. The completed AOO form must be returned to the GRA (gr.pgrf@mq.edu.au).
- Provided all conditions of award have been met, an individual account will then be established for the student by the Office of Financial Services, prior to the relevant funding period.

FINAL REPORT

- Grantees must submit a Final Report on their funded project **no later than one year** after the award was made, or at the time of thesis submission if earlier. The form allows for a one-page account of the use of the funds and their value to the thesis project.

WORKSHOPS

- PGRF grant writing workshops are delivered by the Graduate Research Development team in collaboration with faculties. Enrolments are via the [Researcher Development Calendar](#).
- Departments/schools might also offer workshops. Further information is available through the [Research Training Director](#).

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Applicants are required to consult with their supervisor(s) when preparing their submission. Most issues relating to preparation of applications are addressed in these Guidelines, and applicants should read this document carefully before compiling their application. If after careful review of the Guidelines and consultation with the Principal Supervisor further clarification is required, applicants should contact the GRA (gr.pgrf@mq.edu.au).
- Information on ethical and/or biosafety issues is available through the Ethics Secretariat (ethics.secretariat@mq.edu.au).