



Researcher Development Funding 2025 GUIDELINES*

All applications for Researcher Development Funding will be assessed relative to 'research opportunity and performance evidence' or ROPE. This assessment practice will ensure a more realistic consideration of a researcher's capabilities and assist those who have had career interruptions, variations in career paths and other disruptions or challenges. ROPE provides a framework which will enable equitable measurement of the quality and potential of research achievements. In the assessment of applications for Researcher Development Awards consideration will be given to working arrangements, major disruptions, career histories and personal circumstances, acknowledging research performance given the opportunities available and an individual's life circumstances.

The Researcher Development Awards funding scheme (WSU's internal funding scheme) offers four awards. These funding opportunities are directed towards staff who meet the selection criteria for the scheme and when considered, the ROPE criteria, and who are endeavouring to establish and/or expand their research profile and develop their research ambition. The awards are: (i) Women's Fellowships, (ii) ECR Fellowships, (iii) Career Interruption and (iv) the Indigenous Researcher Development Awards. These awards are not directed to staff with an established research profile (i.e. those that have previously been awarded external funding such as ARC and NHMRC grants) but are intended to provide researcher development support to those who have not yet experienced funding success from such opportunities.

Applicants for the ECR scheme can claim career interruption **in relation to determining their eligibility as an Early Career Researcher**. Claims for career interruption are required to quantify actual research time as well as the ongoing ramifications of the interruption. Career interruption may be ongoing and applicants should make this clear in their claim. Career interruptions can vary greatly dependent on the nature and duration of the associated responsibilities and/or impacts.

1. Roles & Responsibilities

It is the applicant's responsibility to:

1. complete the Expression of Interest form and provide a Research Activity Statement (RAS)
2. ensure in advance that the relevant Research Director, Associate Dean Research (ADR), Dean or Institute Director supports the application
3. in consultation with your Research Director/ADR, partner with a discipline specific internal mentor (level D or E) to strategically develop the application and create a timeline to support the project and be prepared to work with the mentor for the duration of project.
4. submit the application as **one combined PDF document** (including proposal and Research Activity Statement (RAS)) to the Office of the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, REG by 6 Dec 2024 to email address ODVCREI@westernsydney.edu.au
5. provide a report to the Office of the SDVC REG by 5 July 2026 detailing outputs that have resulted from this funding (included but not limited to furthering of research ambition, publications, partnerships, collaborations, non-traditional outcomes, impact, and translation), and
6. participate in surveys related to the award and provide feedback for the development of the program

2. Assessment Panel

The Assessment Panel will be drawn from the academic body across the University ensuring expertise from across disciplines and including a representative from the Vice-Chancellor's Gender Equality Committee. The panel will assess applications and make recommendations to the SDVC REG by the specified date.

3. Application and Eligibility Criteria

(Additional criteria may apply for specific awards – please see below)

1. Individual applications only.
2. Applications must have a PhD or equivalent to apply for the these awards.

3. Applicants must either be a tenured or contracted academic employees (whose contract does not finish before 31 December 2025).
4. Applications are open to academics in substantive Level A, B and C academics positions who meet the established criteria.
5. Applicants must be employed 0.6 FTE or more.
6. Only applicants with 60% or less research workload will be considered for Women's Fellowships. ECRs and Career Interruption applicants who have 60% or more research workload, will be eligible, where they are tied to a current project which is externally funded, they are not identified as a lead investigator on the externally funded project, and where their contract conditions allow participation in additional research.
7. Applications are open to eligible academic staff from Schools, Institutes and Strategic Research Initiatives.
8. Academic staff who are employed as a named investigator via an ARC or NHMRC grant are ineligible to apply for the awards.
9. Applicants can only be awarded the ECR Fellowship once.
10. Applicants may apply for only one type of fellowship or award per round.
11. Applicants are not eligible to apply for Career Interruption funding if they have already received any WSU Researcher Development funding during the interruption period.
12. Applicants undertaking ADP leave may apply for funding – but will not be eligible to apply for teaching/marking/administration relief funding as a part of the application.
13. Funding may be requested for a new initiative or project, or for additional funding for an ongoing project.
14. Applicants should indicate the [UN Sustainable Development Goal](#) (SDG) and ABS [Field of Research](#) (FOR) aligned to their project.
15. Applicants to articulate how this funding will enhance their career.
16. Funding must be expended by 30 November 2025. Purchases cannot be made in 2025 for use in 2026 (e.g. travel cannot be paid for in 2025 and taken in 2026).
17. Purchases cannot be for equipment that would be provided to you as an employee such as:
 - i. Data storage hardware – hard drives, USBs, etc. – please see Data Management (Section 4.3)
 - ii. Computer hardware – items such as these should be provided through your School/Institute
 - iii. Recording devices – cameras, video cameras, phones, voice recorders etc.
 - iv. Consumables – stationery, lab supplies, office equipment
 - v. Laboratory equipment
 - vi. Phones or iPads
18. A case can be made for the purchase of specialised research equipment that will relate to the project you are applying to have funded.
19. Funding cannot be used to extend an existing employment contract.
20. Funding for travel expenses for conference or travel associated to the research, will be awarded for domestic travel only. Conference funding will cover online and domestic conferences, including conference fees, approved incidentals, and air travel. Conference funding will be awarded conditionally, pending the applicant being accepted to present at the listed conference. All travel must meet with the University's travel and procurement processes.
21. All budget items must be fully justified and aligned with a timeline.
22. Applicants must have all publications uploaded on the Researcher Portal. For more information please contact Researchdata@westernsydney.edu.au.

4. Guidelines for completing the application form

1. Ethics Approval

Ethics must be approved before funding will be released. Please remember that ethics applications often need to go before the committee more than once. Delays in obtaining ethics clearance, may jeopardise the project timeline and its proposed outcomes. **Funding will not be allocated to staff to hire an RA to complete the ethics application as funding cannot be disseminated**

until ethics are approved.

Applicants should contact the [Ethics Committee](#) for dates and timelines of meetings.

2. Impact

The application form has a section regarding the potential impact of your proposed research. Please note, this does not relate to publications or citations. This relates to potential 'real world' impact and how your research will translate into a tangible difference or outcome/s arising from this project or future projects for which this project was foundational. The ARC defines impact as "the demonstrable contribution that research makes to the economy, society, culture, national security, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond contributions to academia".

3. Data Management Plan

The application requires a data management plan. Data management planning is an important aspect of the responsible conduct of research. The datasets that you create during your research project are valuable and may need to be preserved over long periods of time. Your data management plan must be provided as part of this application. Please refer to the [Research Data Management | Western Sydney University Library](#) website which will provide more information on university expectations of data management.

4. Research Assistance

It is recommended that most Research Assistants (RA) are budgeted at a Level HEW 6. When considering RA staff, preference should be given in the first instance to PhD students either enrolled or under examination from the Graduate Research School. You can budget for an RA to be paid at a higher rate, particularly if the position requires a PhD. The higher rate must be fully justified in the budget section and reflect duties that align to those indicated in the University Position Descriptors for Professional Staff [WSU Professional Agreement 2022 FWC approved 2.pdf](#). Remember to include on-costs (15.9% on top of the 25% casual loading rate) and any potential pay rises when budgeting for RA's. Please refer to the [Professional Staff Rates 3.35 131023.pdf](#) list for pay rates.

The project can employ more than one Research Assistant if this will deliver the best outcome and this must be justified in the budget.

5. WHS

Your research project should consider government guidelines that work towards ensuring yours or others safety. Please ensure guidelines are met throughout the life of the project.

6. Submission of the Application form

Submissions will be accepted in PDF format only. ONE document which merges the application form, research proposal, signature pages and RAS merged as a PDF file is requested. The submission must be signed by your mentor, Research Director and the Dean/Institute Director of your school/institute.

- i. Submissions must be lodged with the Office of the SDVC REG by 6 Dec 2024.
- ii. If time is to be spent in an Institute, approval must be sought from the relevant Institute Director.
- iii. Applications should be sent, as **one** PDF document to ODVCREI@westernsydney.edu.au
- iv. Include in the subject line the scheme for which you are applying followed by your School/Institute, then your surname e.g. WomensFellowship/SoS/Jones

7. Workload Allocation

Submissions are required to have suitable workload allocated by the School/Institute for the requested project. This needs to be **above** the standard research workload currently assigned to the academic and not included in the existing workload allocation.

5. Timeline *(subject to minor changes if required)*

Date	Action
25 October 2024	Call for applications
6 December 2024	Applications to Office of the SDVC REG
6 January 2025	Funding available to unconditional offers

6. Specifics of each Award

1. Women's Fellowship – up to \$30,000

This program is for staff who identify as women who are employed at Western Sydney as a Lecturer A, B or C. The University is an inclusive environment which recognises and supports gender diversity.

The Women's Fellowship funding can be used to support your research in a variety of ways including teaching or administration buy-outs, travel, pilot studies, research translation and project costs. Please ensure you discuss any buy-out time with your school supervisor.

Funding will be awarded to applicants who clearly demonstrate how the funding will be beneficial to their research profile and career trajectory. Consideration using ROPE (as described above) will be given to staff including those who experienced significant impacts due to COVID and or natural disasters.

These awards are not directed to staff with an established research profile. (i.e. those that have previously been awarded external funding such as ARC and NHMRC grants).

Up to \$30,000 will be awarded to successful applicants. Funds must be spent by 30 November 2025.

2. **Indigenous Researcher Development Award – up to \$30,000**

This identified award (Indigenous only) is part of the Researcher Development Awards scheme and is aimed to attract Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander academic staff at WSU who may have had limited opportunity and/or success at being awarded significant external funding (e.g., ARC and NHMRC grants). The application process will consider not only research opportunity and performance evidence (ROPE) complexities (e.g., career interruptions), but also cultural, community, and kinship obligations unique to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Funding will be awarded to Indigenous applicants who demonstrate how the award would contribute to developing their research outputs – whether they be traditional academic, non-traditional research outcomes (NITRO), and/or community reciprocity orientated – and how such outputs may contribute to future external grant applications.

The Award funding can be used to support your varying research practices in a variety of ways, including teaching or administration buy-outs, travel, pilot studies, research translation, community engagement, reciprocity activities, and project costs. Please ensure you discuss any buy-out time with your school supervisor.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander applicants must provide evidence of Indigeneity as per Western Sydney University guidelines (note. this will be kept confidential and not sent out to the panel for review). **The staff must be at either an early or mid-career stage, and/or be employed at either a Level A, B, or C.** Up to \$30,000 will be awarded to successful applicants. Funds must be spent by 30 November 2025.

3. **Early Career Researcher Fellowship (ECR Fellowship) - up to \$15,000**

The Early Career Researcher Fellowship supports ECRs in balancing teaching and administrative duties while establishing a research profile. The fellowship will provide ECRs with funding to allow for teaching, marking or admin buy-out, or RA assistance. Please ensure you discuss any buy-out time with your supervisor.

This fellowship may or may not be linked to a project and must demonstrate the building of a research career trajectory. This award is intended to be an investment in people and pilot projects that will lead to securing external research funds and/or the furthering of your research ambition.

Funding will cover project costs such as personnel, travel, specialised consumables and resources relating to the project. Funding will be awarded for projects that demonstrate outcomes that will lead to research impact, career development and enhance the recipient's research profile.

For the purposes of this funding Early Career Researcher is defined as someone who has been awarded a PhD within the past 5 years and is employed at Western Sydney as a Lecturer A to C. For eligibility extensions due to significant career interruptions or ongoing career impacts, consideration will be given in the assessment of the ROPE statement.

Up to \$15,000 will be awarded to successful applicants. Funds must be spent by 30 November 2025.

4. **Career Interruption – up to \$10,000**

This funding supports academics:

1. returning to work after a period of personal leave or a career break; spent significant time on health or family responsibilities; transition to remote teaching and learning; experienced changes in workloads to focus on teaching and governance roles and additional pastoral care roles in response to COVID; or experienced a withdrawal of research funding. It is designed to help re-establish research relationships, partnerships and projects that may have lapsed or been put on hold due to a specific career break.
2. who are currently on family or carers' leave (for a period of more than three months), to access funds for research support staff to be employed and supervised to maintain time critical experiments or projects. (n.b. an alternative supervisor must be nominated for the research support staff, whilst the awardee is on leave).

To be eligible for this award, the career interruption must have taken place within the last 2 years and the application should clearly outline which project/research has been disrupted.

Applications for Career Interruptions are open to all eligible A, B, and C academics – workload for fractional appointments will be considered on a case by case basis.

The package will provide support for 12 months up to \$10,000 per successful applicant to support pilot studies, travel, teaching buyouts or research translation, per career interruption period.

7. Assessment Criteria for each award

Women's Fellowship, ECR Fellowship and Indigenous Researchers Development Award

Applicants must address the following criteria for assessment.

1. Originality and significance of the research — demonstrate how the research will contribute to new projects and/or accelerate career ambition.
2. Research quality and methodological robustness to ensure project achieves its expressed outcomes.
3. Research track record in relation to opportunity and how this funding will help your research trajectory. Please provide full explanation. Consideration will be given to significant delays and impacts due to COVID, natural disasters and ROPE.
4. Research impact — describe the potential of this project to create a pathway to impact and benefits of the research beyond the academy.
5. [Research Data Management | Western Sydney University Library](#) – detail the methods you will use to ensure that the data collected is stored in an appropriate way. Please see link for details.
6. Plans for future external funding as a result of this project and/or anticipated enhancement of recipient's research profile; clearly articulated outputs; potential to build collaborations or partnerships.
7. Show collaboration with external industry partners/research end-users as appropriate.
8. Identify and receive approval (in writing) from a relevant mentor who will provide guidance to you throughout the project.
9. Provide a fully justified budget.
10. Provide the [UN Sustainable Development Goal](#) (SDG) and ABS [Field of Research](#) (FOR) aligned to their project.

1. Career Interruption

Applicants must address the following criteria for assessment.

1. Impact of career break on the academic's research ambitions and trajectory.
2. Research track record in relation to opportunity. Track records will be assessed in relation to ROPE and impact and delays caused by COVID and natural disasters.
3. Provide a fully justified budget.
4. If previously supported with this type of funding, please provide details of how this request differs.
5. Details of the next steps for the project, (i.e. 2026 onwards).
6. Provide the [UN Sustainable Development Goal](#) (SDG) and ABS [Field of Research](#) (FOR) aligned to their project.

For further information about this funding scheme, please contact:

ODVCREI@westernsydney.edu.au

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS: 6 Dec 2024