

ECA Collaboration Awards

Faculty of Science - Funding Guidelines



Trust/Gifts	Early Career Overseas Research Grants Fund AND The Early Career Overseas Research Program Grants (USA) AND Albert Shimmins Fund
Funding type	Grant
Applicants	Levels A & B
Maximum award (AU\$)	Up to \$20,000
Rounds per year	1
Funding duration	12 months (1 January 2027-31 December 2027)
Academic Lead	Prof Helen Suter (Assistant Dean, Researcher Development)
Science Research Office Lead	Liam Scott (Award Coordinator)
Scheme Contact Information	Science Research Office
University Gift Records	UGR 076714, UGR 076733, UTR 7.220

Introduction

The Faculty of Science Early Career Academic (ECA) Collaboration Awards provide an opportunity for ECAs to build national and international research collaborations and strengthen their research network.

There are two schemes for this award: **International** (applicant travelling overseas) and **National** (applicant travelling within Australia or invited collaborator travelling to/within Australia). Applicants can be successful in receiving funding for both schemes but can only apply for one scheme per round.

- A. ECR International Collaboration Awards – Worldwide fund and USA fund (up to \$20,000 each)
- B. ECR National Collaboration Awards – National fund (up to \$20,000 each)

We wish to acknowledge the generosity of our donors as the awards are supported by philanthropic donations to the Faculty.

Funding

A maximum of \$20,000 per application will be awarded. Applicants should only request the amount need for their project. Funds awarded should be spent by 31 December 2027. Funding will not typically be carried over beyond this approved period.

Excluded budget items: conference attendance as sole purpose of the travel; travel to field sites (unless this is the location of the collaborator for the proposed visit).

General project costs up to \$20,000 might include (but are not restricted to): co-funding arrangements with external partners or funders; project support through casual research assistance (for data collection, literature review, communication, project management, lab management while the applicant is away); external consultancy (for analyses, genomic, proteomic or metabolomic data to be collected, sample measurements, transcriptions services); reasonable and justifiable applicant travel and accommodation costs for international and national travel; reasonable and justifiable costs associated with bringing collaborators to Australia from overseas or from interstate to Melbourne; conference attendance for the applicant as part of the collaboration visit (if applicable – see note above about excluded budget items).

Diversity and Inclusion Support: Additional financial support for diversity and equity related needs may be available. This is designed to assist people where lack of support will limit the applicant's ability to undertaking the award due to carer responsibilities, disability or other equity issues. Please indicate in the application form if you wish to discuss what is available.

Requirements of the award:

- the awardee must use the funds to conduct research activities for at least four weeks.
- The awardee is expected to offer a seminar or public talk about their research experience whilst in the host country (International Award) and/or in Australia (International Award and National Award) to inspire others about the value of research collaboration. The philanthropic donors must be invited to attend these seminars, where applicable.

Applicant Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Hold a PhD (with conferral date before the scheme close date)*
- Be a level A or B academic in the Faculty Science.
- Hold an academic Teaching & Research role including Research or Education focussed, or a Research Only, or Academic Specialist contract with the Faculty of Science at the University of Melbourne at the time of submission and for at least 6 months during 2027 at 0.5 FTE. For those applicants whose contract expires before 30 June 2027, evidence from the Head of School confirming the contract will be extended can be included with the application form to demonstrate eligibility.
- The collaboration must enable new and/or emerging scientific discipline research.
- Only ONE application can be submitted per applicant per round.
- Applicants can only ever receive a total of one International Award and one National Award.
- Preference will be given to applicants who have never received any funding from the Collaboration Award scheme (including past iterations of the scheme).

***Exemptions will be considered for those with alternative academic careers. Enquire at the Science Research Office before application submission: science-research@unimelb.edu.au**

Evaluation and Assessment

A Committee chaired by the Faculty of Science Assistant Dean, Researcher Development will rank applications against the following assessment criteria:

- Evidence of a new or emerging research collaboration with national or international researchers or industry, taking into consideration track record. [30%]
- Explanation of the research experience, including networking and collaboration, and/or new skills that will be developed and potential of the proposed visit and/or connection to contribute to the career development of the applicant. [30%]
- Demonstrated capability of the collaborator(s) to contribute to the proposed research activity. A Letter of Support from the collaborator(s) is required. [20%]
- A well-presented and justified budget within the grant limits with appropriate costing for salary, travel and accommodation and other components. [10%]
- Explanation of future communication and promotion of the project activities, overseas and/or in Australia. [10%]

Application Process

Applicants will submit their full application on SmartyGrants according to the timeline below.

Process	Date
Scheme Opens	1 September 2026
Round Close (Full applications due)	31 October 2026 (5.00pm AEDT)
Faculty Review	November 2026

Notifications of Outcomes	November 2026
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Funding Conditions

- A written report on the project outcomes, along with a financial expenditure report, will be due six weeks after the project end date.
- The project outcomes report must address the objectives stated in the original proposal and include a summary of all activities, including any variations. Where outputs (joint publications, funding applications, etc.) will take time to achieve, the report should indicate when they are expected. This report must be prepared using the Faculty of Science Impact Statement form in SmartyGrants.
- The financial expenditure report should be prepared with the assistance of the Science Research Office. All spending should reflect the applicant's original budget unless variations were approved prior to expenditure. Any unspent funds must be returned to the Faculty of Science.
- It is a requirement that the recipient communicate to students and the public about their experience and research outcomes. The preferred communication is in the form of a public talk where the donors must be invited to attend.