**UNE Internal Funding Scheme (UNE IFS)**

**Round: 2024 for projects commencing 2025**

**GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS**

**1. Introduction**

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research advises that UNE strategic research funding will be made available to support high quality research proposals from individuals and small research teams that will build the longer-term research profile of the University.

The UNE Internal Funding Scheme will see grants of up to $5,000 for Tier 1 applications and up to $10,000 for Tier 2 applications, awarded to early career researchers**\*** (ECRs) and mid-career researchers**^** (MCRs). The choice of Tier should be guided by the aims of the project, with the budget reflecting the best value for money in achieving those aims.

**\***Early career researcher definition: as of 1 October 2024, less than 5 years since conferral of PhD, excluding research career interruptions.

**^**Mid-career researcher definition: as of 1 October 2024, between 5 and 15 years since conferral of PhD, excluding research career interruptions.

**2. Aims of the Scheme**

**2.1.** To increase UNE’s competitiveness in external grant funding rounds by motivating early- and mid-career researchers (EMCRs) to complete exploratory/pilot projects, which will support the development of UNE-led competitive external grant applications.

**2.2.** To support projects which are designed to strengthen the resubmission of unsuccessful, but highly-ranked applications to external competitive schemes (near misses) which have undergone a peer review process.

**2.3.** To augment UNE’s research profile in areas which align with UNE’s strategic research plans, particularly in relation to disciplines considered to be strategically significant to UNE.

**2.4.** To foster new UNE basic and applied research projects which involve industry collaboration and lead to successful externally-funded competitive grants.

**3. Funding Allocations**

**3.1.** The University will provide an appropriate allocation to support a number of ECR and MCR grants, capped at either $5,000 (Tier 1) or $10,000 (Tier 2) each. Applicants are required to submit a well-justified budget which represents good value for money.

**3.2.** Funding requested may not be awarded in full if the UNE Internal Funding Scheme (UNE IFS) Review Panel deems components non-essential to the completion of the project and/or are not satisfactorily justified.

**4. Eligibility**

**4.1.** Lead applicants must be a UNE staff member, hold a PhD and meet the relevant EMCR criteria listed above.

**4.2.** EMCRs who have confirmed employment arrangements with UNE **for the duration of their proposed projects** are eligible to apply. Research Services must be informed as soon as possible of a change in employment status.

**4.3.** Level E (Professor) staff are eligible to be part of the research team but not as a lead investigator. Level D staff can apply if they can demonstrate eligibility in line with EMCR definitions.

**4.4.** Adjunct staff based at UNE are eligible to be part of the research team but not as a lead investigator.

**4.5.** Adjunct or other academic and research staff at other institutions are eligible to be part of a research team but not as a lead investigator.

**4.6.** Applications will be accepted from individuals and teams. However, consideration should be given to the requirements of relevant external funding schemes for which they propose to apply as an outcome of the IFS grant. Research team applications may include researchers from other institutions/organisations. Inclusion of external collaborators should take into account the research track record and eligibility of all team members in order to maximise competitiveness in external funding schemes.

**4.7.** Staff may be lead investigators on **one** UNE IFS application. However, they may be part of a team on other UNE IFS applications per funding round.

**4.8.** Past recipients of UNE IFS funding are not eligible to re-apply for **3 years**.

**5. Criteria for Selection**

**5.1.** The primary criteria used for assessment are:

**Quality of the project – 30%**

* the quality of the proposed research project, including novelty, methodology and feasibility, including value for money.

**Applicant and team – 30%**

* the quality of the lead applicant, and their team, including the mentor where applicable.
* strength of the collaboration which may include partnerships with industry[[1]](#footnote-1) and/or inter-disciplinary partnerships.

**Future trajectory of the project – 20%**

* the applicant’s capability to submit an application to a competitive external funding scheme (previous ‘near-misses’ in external rounds, etc.)

**Strategic Alignment – 20%**

* Demonstrated alignment of the project with UNE’s plan for [research and scholarship](https://www.une.edu.au/strategic-plan/creating-knowledge).
* Alignment of the project with disciplines of strategic significance to UNE.

**6. General Conditions**

**6.1.** A project will be funded for **one year only**. Requests for an extension of time will be considered in exceptional circumstances only and will be at the discretion of the DVCR.

**6.2.** Funds must only be used on approved budget items, as outlined and justified in the application. Where the UNE IFS Review Panel has determined budget items which are non-essential to the completion of the project and/or are not satisfactorily justified, funds may not be spent on these items. This will be communicated with the UNE IFS grant recipient prior to commencement of the project.

**6.3.** Non-allowable, and non-reimbursable, budget items include: covering current salary or teaching relief; conference attendance; personal items; toiletries; alcohol; gratuities; phone and internet costs.

**6.4.** Funds will **not** be provided for PhD scholarship stipends or PhD operating costs. Students may work part-time on the project where it is demonstrated that the work to be undertaken by the student will assist them in their professional development (developing relevant skills etc.).

**6.5.** Applicants to the UNE IFS must identify at least one UNE-led submission to an external competitive funding source for which they commit to applying within 12 months of the end date of the UNE IFS grant.

**6.6.** ECR applicants must identify a UNE senior academic who will provide mentorship throughout the UNE Internal Funding Scheme Round. The UNE senior academic will be required to endorse the ECR’s application to the UNE IFS and confirm commitment to mentoring the ECR through to submission of a UNE-led application for external competitive funding.

**6.7.** Where an industry partner is included in the application, it is an expectation, but not a condition, that they will provide in-kind support.

**6.8.** UNE should be acknowledged in the project outputs, even if the project lead leaves UNE.

**7. Approval**

**7.1.** Approval of an application must be obtained from the Faculty/Directorate via the [Pure portal](https://pure.une.edu.au/admin/workspace.xhtml) which is then regarded as evidence of:

* approval for an applicant to undertake the research project proposed within the Faculty/Directorate;
* the Faculty/Directorate’s willingness and ability to provide the basic support, including any dedicated resourcing (subject to budget approval), necessary for the applicant to complete the project.

**8. Administration of Grants**

**8.1.** Grants will be allocated a project code (research funding account) by the central Research Finance team with a budget equal to the value of the award. All expenditure against this project code will be subject to University financial delegations and the availability of funds in the account.

**8.2.** Over-expenditure is not permitted. Any costs incurred in addition to what was approved in the original budget **are the responsibility of the grantee**.

**8.3.** Requests for variations to budget are only considered in exceptional circumstances. Any such requests must be consistent with the funding Guidelines and the approved budget.

**8.4.** If a grantee leaves the University, and as soon as their notice of resignation is announced, all unexpended funds are to be returned to the DVCR portfolio for possible reallocation.

**8.5.** Funds will be awarded and allocated to the relevant project code in December 2024 for use from January 2025. Funds must be expended within 12 months, i.e., by end December 2025. If an extension to the project period is required, the grantee should seek approval from the DVCR via email to the Grants team ([grants@une.edu.au](mailto:grants@une.edu.au)), who will notify the grantee of the outcome.

**8.6.** Any equipment purchased through a UNE IFS grant remains the property of UNE and cannot be transferred to another institution.

**9. Assessment of Applications**

**9.1.** The Director of Research Services will chair the UNE IFS Review Panel and will be assisted in review of the proposals by academic and/or non-academic members, as determined by the DVCR. The UNE IFS Review Panel will make recommendations to the DVCR on successful applicants.

**9.2.** Early Career Researcher (ECR) applications will be assessed separately from Mid-Career Researcher (MCR) applications, i.e., ECR applications will only be assessed against other ECR applications; MCR applications will only be assessed against other MCR applications. This also applies to Tier 1 and Tier 2 applications (each category will be assessed separately).

**9.3.** Co-funding from other sources, including industry in-kind commitment, will be looked upon favourably by the UNE IFS Review Panel.

**9.4.** Outcomes will be provided to the lead applicants by the Grants team.

1. Industry partner definition: *an Australian organisation with an Australian Company Number (ACN) or an Australian government entity (Commonwealth, State/ Territory or Local) or an Australian not-for-profit/charity registered on the Australian Government’s Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Charity Register.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)