



**UNSW**  
SYDNEY

Australia's  
Global  
University

Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor  
(Research Infrastructure)

## Research Infrastructure Scheme

Supporting Collaborative Research

# Guidelines for Funding in 2024

Version: 05 August 2023

Version History	Description of Change	Status
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## 1 OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

The Research Infrastructure Scheme (RIS) will provide UNSW with a world-class research environment to attract and retain a critical mass of research excellence. Whether it is in the humanities, arts and social sciences, or in medical research, science or engineering, our investment in research infrastructure and equipment is a strategic commitment to enable our researchers to work at the cutting edge of local, national and international research. To achieve this goal, the scheme aims to enable not only the acquisition of high-end infrastructure, but also to maximise accessibility of infrastructure by funding support staff to facilitate access and training.

The following types of projects will be funded under the scheme in 2024.

### 1.1 Faculty Infrastructure Projects

This includes Faculty-based research equipment, equipment maintenance and upgrades, database subscriptions and other Faculty-based infrastructure. These proposals can include applicants from more than one Faculty.

### 1.2 Mark Wainwright Analytical Centre Infrastructure Projects

These projects are for infrastructure to be based within the Mark Wainwright Analytical Centre (MWAC) rather than within a Faculty. As above, proposals may include research equipment, equipment maintenance and upgrades, database subscriptions and other infrastructure.

Faculty-based staff are encouraged to contact the Executive Director of MWAC or the Head of the relevant MWAC Facility, if they feel a particular piece of equipment would be more suitable to be housed at the Centre than within a Faculty, or would like to suggest a cross-Faculty proposal involving MWAC.

### 1.3 Cross-Faculty Infrastructure Projects

Cross-Faculty Infrastructure Projects (cFIP) are identical to the projects described above except that **funds** are split over more than one Faculty, or Faculty(ies) and MWAC. Proposals that include applicants from more than one Faculty but only involve funding via a single Faculty are not considered cross-Faculty proposals.

Whereas splitting funds across multiple Faculties can be advantageous for resources that are shared across Faculties, experience from previous shows that these projects are only successful if coordinated well across Faculties. If you are planning a cFIP, it is recommended you seek advice from the Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Infrastructure) as soon as possible.

## 2 ELIGIBILITY AND FUNDING RULES

- a) Applicants must be members of the academic staff of UNSW, and on the payroll of UNSW or have been formally appointed to UNSW according to established processes for Conjoint or clinical appointments for Area Health Services or associated research institutions.
- b) Conjoint and clinical staff must have all their research productivity (e.g., grant applications, postgraduate research student supervision, UNSW affiliation on publications) submitted through and administered by UNSW to be eligible to apply for support under this scheme.

- c) Applicants may be named on a maximum of two proposals of any kind plus one MWAC Infrastructure Project in the same funding round.
- d) Emeritus and honorary staff are not eligible to apply for support from this scheme.

### **3 FUNDING SOURCES AND ARRANGEMENTS**

- a) The UNSW RIS is supported by the University's 2025 Strategy funding. Additional funding available via the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Equipment Grant will also be rolled into this scheme.
- b) Faculty Infrastructure Projects and MWAC Infrastructure Projects are funded from separate funding allocations within the overall budget envelope for the scheme.
- c) For Faculty Infrastructure Projects, a formula is used to calculate the distribution of funds across Faculties based on each Faculty's research income averaged over the last three years. HERDC Category 1 income is weighted at 60%, Category 2-4 income at 40%.
- d) Successful projects will be fully funded where possible, hence a Faculty's allocation in a particular year may not exactly match the allocation formula. Adjustments will be made in future years to ensure appropriate allocation over time.
- e) On closure of a RIS project, any unspent funds will be made available to the relevant Faculty's RIS allocation for the next round.
- f) Projects which are funded for two years will incur a forward commitment against the respective Faculty's allocation in the following year.
- g) Faculties or Schools may wish to coordinate a local expression of interest (EOI) call prior to the submission of a full proposal.

## 4 SUPPORTED EQUIPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### 4.1 Faculty or MWAC Infrastructure Projects

These projects support similar infrastructure, with the distinction being the location and ongoing support of the infrastructure either occurring within a Faculty or within the MWAC. For the purpose of these projects, research infrastructure is defined as a single significant item (or a complete system or infrastructure initiative) required to support research activity at UNSW.

#### 4.1.1 Items supported:

- a) All items consistent with the Department of Education and Training's Research Support Program's<sup>1</sup> objective to support the systemic costs of research. These could include, for example:
  - i. Support for libraries, database subscriptions, research computing centres, animal houses, herbaria;
  - ii. Equipment purchase, installation, maintenance and upgrades;
  - iii. Equipment and major facilities to underpin research activities, excluding capital works;
  - iv. Offsetting (or partly offsetting) the salaries of technical or research support staff who support research activities (including computing and IT support staff, laboratory technicians, support staff for major instruments and databases, etc.);
  - v. Funding for initiatives to support research activity in the humanities, arts and social sciences; and,
  - vi. Providing or improving the research infrastructure for postgraduate research students.
- b) Items eligible under the NHMRC Equipment Grants Scheme, as assessed against the following additional criteria:
  - i. The equipment should support the highest quality health and medical research, as supported by the NHMRC (or other competitive grant support);
  - ii. Consideration should be given to the lack of access to similar equipment in the institution or region; and,
  - iii. The collaborative gain through the use of the equipment should be explained, e.g. multi-user equipment which crosses disciplines, research groups or departments.

#### 4.1.2 Level and duration of funding:

- a) There is no lower limit set on the level of funding requested. However, proposals must be significant and will be assessed on the basis that they will make a real and positive contribution to the University's research effort and 2025 Strategy.

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<sup>1</sup>Research Support Program guidelines, including objectives, are available from the Department of Education and Training's website at: <https://www.education.gov.au/research-support-program>

- b) There is no defined upper limit of funding that can be requested, however, Faculties should consider the size of projects relative to their funding allocation when ranking proposals. The allocation of funds across Faculties is calculated as described under Section c).
- c) For equipment and infrastructure above \$200,000, there must be a compelling reason why this should not be more appropriately obtained through the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Infrastructure and Equipment Facilities (LIEF) Scheme<sup>2</sup>, or other eligible major infrastructure schemes.
- d) Generally funding will be awarded for one year only, however, multi-year proposals (up to a maximum of 2 years) will be considered if justified. If funds are not expended within the allocated timeframe due to unforeseen circumstances, funding may be carried forward for a maximum of one year with an extension request.
- e) Funding for this initiative will be allocated centrally. The payment for equipment and infrastructure will be made by the relevant School/Faculty/MWAC from an approved account on presentation of an appropriate invoice or order.

## 4.2 Items Not Supported

The following items are not supported by the RIS:

- a) The provision of regular office or laboratory infrastructure, which would normally be supplied to members of staff.
- b) Computing equipment designed to support undergraduate teaching programs (e.g. general computer laboratories) or office equipment.
- c) Costs for equipment hire, the acquisition of services or purchase of time on computers, vessels, aerial photography or access to specialised facilities are NOT permitted.
- d) UNSW does not provide 'grant-in-aid' or contributions to equipment that will become assets of other institutions. Any items purchased through this initiative must be listed as assets of UNSW. If they are installed 'off-site', they still need to be recorded on the University's Assets Register with a fractional ownership if the equipment is jointly owned.
- e) Funding cannot be used for major capital works (buildings, also see Section 7), rental of accommodation, or travel costs directly associated with individual projects.
- f) Salaries of teaching and research staff, including the cost of "buying time" to free such staff to do more research (e.g. through the appointment of administrative staff),
- g) Salaries of staff supporting research at an institutional level or staff involved in research administration (e.g. Research Grants Officer), or postgraduate research student stipends.
- h) Ongoing maintenance of funded infrastructure beyond the initial application – applicants will need to demonstrate how routine maintenance and operational costs will be met.
- i) "Rainy day" funds, such as funds for potential future repairs, or funds to purchase equipment on an "ad-hoc" or "as-required" basis.

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<sup>2</sup>Further details on the ARC LIEF scheme are available from the ARC website at:

<http://www.arc.gov.au/linkage-infrastructure-equipment-and-facilities>

- j) Costs associated with networking events and workshops, including venue hire, promotional material (printing etc), catering, gifts and entertainment costs.

## 5 ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

- a) Expression of Interest (EOI) may be required for Faculty and MWAC infrastructure projects (including cross-Faculty Infrastructure Projects), should your School, Faculty or Unit elect to hold one. You will need to enquire with your local research management office to check if this is relevant to you and for the details of the EOI process.
- b) Proposals for Faculty Infrastructure Projects (including cross-Faculty Infrastructure Projects) will be ranked and recommended for funding by Faculties based on the selection criteria and strategic research priorities for the Faculty. Similarly, MWAC Infrastructure Project proposals will be ranked according to the selection criteria and the Centre's strategic priorities.
- c) Proposals together with ranked lists and recommendations will be submitted to the PVCRI for review in consultation with various stakeholders, such as Estate Management (EM) and Research Ethics and Compliance Support (RECS) teams. Applications will be assessed on eligibility, duplication, WHS, site, ethics and other compliance considerations.
- d) Cross-Faculty Infrastructure Project proposals that are ranked disparately by the participating Faculties will be discussed with the relevant research offices with the aim to come to a resolution on whether or not the proposal should be funded.
- e) The following guidelines are provided regarding the criteria for assessing proposals for funding. However, it is acknowledged that Faculties/ MWAC may base their ranking on additional Faculty-/ Centre-specific priorities.
- i. Demonstrated need for the proposed infrastructure support 50%
    - What is the current availability and accessibility of this type of infrastructure at UNSW?
    - Is there demonstrated need from researchers wanting to utilise the proposed infrastructure to support current or emerging research strengths?
    - Does the proposed infrastructure improve the use of currently available but underused equipment/facilities?
    - Is there a demonstrated need for specialist staffing and support?
    - What are the access and support plans; e.g. role of the requested support staff?
  - ii. Capability of the proposed infrastructure to enhance collaborations 30%
    - Is the infrastructure relevant to researchers from multiple disciplines/research areas?
    - Has there been strong interest from researchers from other Schools/Faculties to access this equipment?

- Would any already-established, planned projects or collaborations be dependent on, or benefit from, the proposed infrastructure?
- iii. Significance and innovative nature of research supported by proposal 20%
- Does the research supported by this infrastructure address a significant problem?
  - Is the research supported by this infrastructure innovative and novel?
  - How does the research supported by this infrastructure align with Faculty research priorities and the 2025 Strategy<sup>3</sup>?

## 6 PROCUREMENT

- a) Any acquisition of research equipment or infrastructure under this scheme MUST, as any procurement activity made on behalf of UNSW Sydney, be in accordance with the University's procurement policy and procedure<sup>4</sup>. Detailed information is available in the "Buying and Procurement" section of the Finance-Hub SharePoint site<sup>5</sup>.
- b) According to the University's procurement policy and procedure, minimum three written competitive quotes must be obtained for goods/services above AUD50,000 (excl. GST) and one quote for goods/services below AUD50,000 (excl. GST). Quotes are not required for goods/services below AUD3,000 (excl. GST).
- c) When requesting quotes from suppliers for applications to the RIS, please use the "Request for Quotes" (RFQ) template provided by Strategic Procurement<sup>6</sup>.
- d) If funds are awarded for infrastructure to be placed at an organisation affiliated with UNSW, then UNSW at all times retains title to goods purchased using these funds. The affiliated organisation is also responsible for: a) maintaining the equipment in good working order, unless the goods have, as reasonably agreed between UNSW and the affiliated organisation, reached the end of their useful life; and b) protecting the goods against theft, loss, damage, or unauthorised use.
- e) It is recommended that you contact the UNSW Procurement team to discuss your requirements and the support services they offer before commencing any major procurement process.

<sup>3</sup>See <https://www.2025.unsw.edu.au/>

<sup>4</sup>UNSW's procurement policy and procedure link: <https://unsw.sharepoint.com/sites/finance-hub/SitePages/Policies-and-Procedures.aspx>

<sup>5</sup><https://unsw.sharepoint.com/sites/finance-hub/SitePages/Buying%20and%20Paying.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> The template is available on the RIS website: RIS website: <http://research.unsw.edu.au/unsw-research-infrastructure-scheme>



## 7 SPACE REQUIREMENTS, RISK ASSESSMENT AND RESOURCE SUPPORT

- a) Any application for research equipment or infrastructure under this scheme needs to demonstrate that consideration has been given to:
- i. The availability of on-going suitable space to house/operate the equipment/staff requested.
  - ii. Installation requirements for the equipment; these must be fully costed in the budget. For this purpose, a Site and Services Checklist<sup>7</sup> must be completed, signed by the Head of School and the applicant, in consultation with EM where necessary, and attached to all applications. In many cases, there will not be any issues regarding installation or space. However, unforeseen issues can lead to major project delays and cost blow outs. The checklist has been designed to pick up any unforeseen circumstances, and as such submission of the completed and signed checklist is mandatory.
  - iii. Any need for refurbishment of existing space to accommodate the equipment. In this case, such costs must be covered by the School/Faculty budget **or** the School/Faculty submission for funding through the Capital Works Program. Such applications can only be supported in principle, subject to approval of the refurbishment budget.
  - iv. The OHS and risk assessment requirements for the design, manufacture, importation, supply, installation/erection, commissioning, use, alteration, dismantling, storage and disposal of the equipment.
  - v. Any other requirements associated with ethics, radiation safety, gene technology or other compliance<sup>8</sup>.
  - vi. The on-going maintenance and technical staff requirements beyond this funding application. These costs must be covered by the School/Faculty budget.

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<sup>7</sup>The latest checklist template is available on the RIS website: RIS website: <http://research.unsw.edu.au/unsw-research-infrastructure-scheme>

<sup>8</sup>For more information, visit <https://research.unsw.edu.au/recs>

## 8 APPLICATION PROCESS

- a) Individuals (or teams of individuals) will put forward a strategic case and obtain approval from their Head of School using the scheme's online Application Management System (AMS). The link to AMS as well as detailed guides and instructions will be available on the RIS website<sup>9</sup>.
- b) Schools/Faculties may elect to run an internal EOI process prior to accepting full applications. These EOI processes are managed by the Schools/Faculties and are not managed by the PVC (Research Infrastructure). If unsure, please contact your local research office to check if you are required to submit an EOI.
- c) All mandatory sections of the online application, including the attachment of any **supporting documentation**, must be completed. A preview of the application questions is available on the RIS website<sup>9</sup>. These sections include:
  - i. a clear and concise description of equipment, infrastructure or support requested;
  - ii. the strategic purpose of the request including the impact the equipment or infrastructure will have on improving UNSW's research capacity;
  - iii. a statement of the research programs or groups which will be supported by the equipment or infrastructure;
  - iv. details of the funding requested **including quote(s)** and budget justification (equipment funded under the RIS will be expected to undergo a rigorous procurement process to ensure value for money is achieved and probity and risks are managed. This means that the eventual supplier may not be the same as the supplier named in the application. At the same time, it is important that budgets are based on competitive quotes and fully justified); and
  - v. a completed and signed **Site and Services Checklist** (see Section 7a (ii) above).
- d) Failure to attach the required **supporting documents** (i.e. Site and Services Checklist and quote(s)) with your application may result in the application being deemed ineligible for funding.
- e) Applications must be submitted by the University-wide common deadline below.
- f) Via the AMS, applications are first submitted to Schools and MWAC units who may run their own internal processes for ranking (optional) and approval of applications. Once applications are approved by Schools/MWAC Units (via AMS), they will be automatically forwarded to the relevant Faculty or the MWAC Executive Director's Office.
- g) The relevant Faculties/MWAC will be required to conduct a ranking and approval process based on RIS selection criteria and Faculty/MWAC priorities (via the AMS portal) by a University-wide common deadline (see below). All approved applications, together with their ranking and recommendations, will be forwarded to the PVCRI.

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<sup>9</sup>RIS website: <http://research.unsw.edu.au/unsw-research-infrastructure-scheme>

h) Timetable for the 2024 RIS round. All deadlines are COB unless otherwise stated.

Phase	Event/Milestone	Dates
Announcement and Application	RIS 2024 guidelines published	Week beginning 7 August 2023
	<b>Call for full applications via the RIS online Application Management System (AMS) open<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Monday, 21 August 2023</b>
	Information session (MS Teams) <i>link to be advertised via the RGC MyGrants mailing list and on the RIS website</i>	Tuesday, 22 August 2023
	<b>Applications close</b>	<b>Monday 25 September 2023</b>
Approval	Schools/MWAC Units to complete review and approval of applications	Wednesday 11 October 2023
	Faculties/MWAC to complete review, ranking and approval of applications	Wednesday 25 October 2023
Funding	Announcement of funding outcomes	Early-mid November
	Distribution of funds	January 2024

Note 1 –Your Faculty, School or MWAC unit **may** choose to run an EOI process prior to accepting applications via RIS (as per section 8(b)). Please check with your local research office if you are unsure whether this applies to you.

## 9 POST-AWARD REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- a) As a condition of the award, reports must be submitted annually for all open RIS projects.
  - i. For 1-year projects, a final report will be requested approximately 12 months after the release of funds.
  - ii. For 2-year projects, annual report will be requested approximately 12 months after release of funds, **and** a final report approximately 24 months after release of funds.
  - iii. All annual and final reports are strictly due by the date indicated in the reporting notice.
- b) Reporting will be conducted via a personalised online survey system that will be sent to Chief Investigators via an automated notice. A preview of the report questions can be found on the RIS website<sup>10</sup>
- c) Requests for an extension for project expenditure can be submitted during the annual and final reporting process.
- d) Reports will be used by the office of the PVC (Research Infrastructure) to assess project progress and to establish a register of equipment / infrastructure funded under RIS. The register will be made available on the RIS website.
- e) Failure to comply with reporting requirements may affect approval for carrying funds forward, if required, and may impact eligibility for future rounds of RIS.

## 10 RESOURCES AND CONTACT

- a) Additional resources for this funding scheme, such as templates, report forms and Frequently Asked Questions, are available on the Research Infrastructure Scheme website:  
<https://research.unsw.edu.au/unsw-research-infrastructure-scheme>.
- b) For enquiries or advice on this scheme, please contact the Office of the PVC (Research Infrastructure) via [pvcresin@unsw.edu.au](mailto:pvcresin@unsw.edu.au).

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<sup>10</sup> RIS website: <http://research.unsw.edu.au/unsw-research-infrastructure-scheme>