MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTRES (MQRC) SCHEME

FUNDING RULES AND APPLICATION GUIDELINES

FOR FUNDING COMMENCING 2020

Notifications of Intent to Submit close Wednesday 29 May 2019

Full applications close at 5pm Wednesday 24 July 2019

Applications must be submitted in PURE
Late applications will not be accepted.

Please read the MQRC Proposal Instructions document carefully in conjunction with these Funding Rules and adhere to the page limits and formatting procedures as outlined.

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Enquiries regarding MQRC applications should be directed in the first instance to:

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1. **OUTLINE OF THE MQRC SCHEME**

The Macquarie University Research Centres (MQRC) Scheme is the means by which major, coordinated, cohesive and high-performing research groupings are branded, promoted and supported as Macquarie University Research Centres. The scheme exists to deliver on the four key research objectives of the Strategic Research Framework by seeding development of future externally-funded research centres by supporting the development of high quality research environments and aiding the branding and visibility of high performing researchers. MQRCs established in this application round will be for a period of three years, after which they may seek extension of Centre status in accordance with Section 10 below. MQRCs established in this application round will receive annual funding of up to $50,000 per year, subject to satisfactory annual progress reports.

Funds awarded to Centres under the MQRC Scheme are not to be used to fund research projects directly. They are intended to provide support for the Centre management and administration (e.g. to provide teaching relief and/or administrative assistance for the Centre Director) or to support Centre activities (e.g. workshops and inviting key visiting scholars to the Centre).

Expected characteristics of MQRCs are:

- alignment with World-leading research, World-changing impact: Strategic Research Framework 2014-2024
- the Centre articulates a pathway to an externally-funded research centre over a minimum of three or maximum six-year period
- the Director should be a senior research leader, noting that there is no requirement about the academic appointment level of the Director
- each Centre will have a constitution that deals with issues including: the aims and structure of the Centre, including membership, executive and advisory committees, meetings of the Centre and of its committees; financing; intellectual property; ethics approvals and contracts;
- involvement of at least six continuing staff members, with the profile of membership to be appropriate to the discipline, the need to build capacity, support the development of early career researchers and higher degree research candidates through existing mechanisms, and having regard to appropriate gender balance. The involvement of external members, either from research institutions or from other organisations, is encouraged however MQRC funds are not to be expended to support external members of the Centre.

It is expected a MQRC will use the term of funding to build research excellence through increased:

- research outputs per FTE,
- research income per FTE,
- engagement within and outside the academy,
- research impact, and
- increased profile in the research area.
The Centre will establish and implement a plan to become an externally-funded research centre over a minimum of three or maximum six-year period.

A limited number of new MQRCs may be established each year for a three-year period. During the third year of the initial funding period an application for up to three years further funding may be considered. The maximum term of central funding for a MQRC will be six years. Applications will be evaluated by the Centres Panel against the Selection Criteria, with recommendations made to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).

MQRCs do not have the status of Departments and HDR student enrolments will continue through the Host Departments. Distribution of block grant funding to MQRCs is at the discretion of the relevant Executive Dean(s).

A listing of common activities and functions of existing MQRCs is given in Appendix A.

2. APPLICATION PROCESS

All proposed Centres must submit a Notification of Intent to Submit to the Research Services Pre Award Team eight weeks prior to scheme close date and attend a meeting with the Chair of the MQRC Review Panel to discuss the proposed Centre prior to applying.

The Notification should be no more than 1 A4 page, sent to research.preaward@mq.edu.au including:
(i) the proposed Centre name
(ii) a brief overview of the research problem/s the Centre will address; and
(iii) the proposed Centre Director and team.

The subsequent Centre application process will involve:

- Submission of application form by proposed Centre Director. Access to the full application form will be provided by Research Services following the Notification process outlined above and discussion with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Performance and Innovation).
- Panel review of applications and interview with Centre Director and a small number of Centre members.
- Outcome of application communicated by Research Services.

3. CERTIFICATION

Certification process to be confirmed as part of the full application and will utilise the Pure system.

4. SELECTION CRITERIA

1. Research Centre Outcomes:
The proposed or existing Centre:
   a) articulates a vision, trajectory and plan, including milestones, over a three to six-year period to seed development of future externally-funded research Centre/s
   b) articulates how the vision and plan for the Centre contributes to the Strategic Research Framework Key Objectives
2. **Subject matter:**
   a) The focus of the Centre is on a significant research problem or issue.
   b) A cohesive program of activities is planned to address the research problem.

3. **Research Center team:**
   a) Centre members have demonstrated quality research relevant to opportunity with relation to publication track record, success in external competitive grants and/or industry partnerships, research impact, and HDR supervision and completions.
   b) The Director and key research team members have demonstrated leadership capabilities appropriate to role and have capacity to deliver against proposed Centre outcomes.
   c) Consideration has been given to diversity of the research team, gender balance, academic level, profile of the key researchers, and inclusion of early career researchers.

4. **Research environment:**
   a) The Centre has competitive advantage relative to other research being conducted in Australia and internationally.
   b) Macquarie University is appropriate as the location for the Centre and has suitable infrastructure to support the Centre research program, vision and plans.
   c) The Centre is able to provide a quality mentoring and coaching environment for early- and mid-career researchers.

5. **Governance and structure:**
   a) The constitution of the Advisory Board is made with consideration to quality and breadth of experience appropriate to the work and aims of the Centre and with regard to what the Advisory Board is likely to bring to the Centre.

6. **Selection Process**
   Applications will be evaluated by the Centres Panel against the above Selection Criteria. Typically, there will be a short listing of applications for interview. Key staff associated with short-listed applications will be offered the opportunity to give a brief presentation to the Panel and to respond to questions (particular issues that may be identified by the Panel in advance of the interview). Following the interview stage, the Panel will make recommendations to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and applicants will be advised of the outcome by the Post-Award team. Unsuccessful applicants will be provided with feedback at that time. Unsuccessful applicants have the right to seek a review of outcome, on procedural grounds only.

7. **Eligibility**
   Any grouping of researchers may apply to form a MQRC under this Scheme, with the exception of a Centre that has National Research Centre status and/or is receiving other direct central funding from the University. Therefore, CRCs, ARC Centres of Excellence, Major National Research Facilities, and similar Centres funded externally are not eligible to apply to the MQRC Scheme. Uncertainty concerning eligibility must be resolved in
advance of submitting an application by contacting research.preaward@mq.edu.au for advice. The Panel reserves the right to make a determination on eligibility issues not specifically addressed in these Guidelines.

8. FUNDING

Awards made under this round of the MQRC Scheme will commence on 1 January 2020 and will normally be funded until 31 December 2022. Subject to satisfactory progress, funding will be available by 1 January each year.

It is expected that the majority of allocated funding will be fully expended each year. Centres can, through the Annual Progress Report, make an application to Research Services to carryover funding from one year to the next, however funds cannot be carried over beyond the Centre end date.

Centres may, after 24 months of funding, submit an application for extension of funding for a further three years as set out in Section 9.

9. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Annual reporting will be based on Centre milestones (ref. Section 5.1). Milestone reports will address progress made toward achievement of the Centre’s short, medium and long-term objectives and will provide Centres with an opportunity to raise issues with their progress.

Reporting on expenditure of MQRC funding will be required and a budget request and justification for the following year is required, as is a request for carry over of funds if necessary.

Timing of reports:

- Report term: 1 November to 30 October*
- Report due date 30 October
- Panel review and interviews during November
- Outcomes communicated early December
- Release of budget before end December, subject to satisfactory progress

*In year one, reports submitted in October will report on actual achievements and budget to date (January – October) plus expectations and commitments through to end of year.

10. APPLICATION FOR EXTENSION

Centres may, after 24 months of funding, submit a case for a further 3 years funding.

This case should outline how the Centre has performed against Centre milestones and the expected outcomes of the MQRC scheme, articulate a strategy for the additional three-year funding period and plans for the Centre beyond the additional funding period being applied for.

Written applications for extension should be made no later than April of the third funding year and will be assessed based on the written submission and a panel interview. Panel interviews will take place in May so that the outcome of this decision will be made known to the Centre no less than six months prior to end of initial funding period.
Centres may receive funding for all or part of the additional three-year period or the panel may recommend the Centre no longer be funded. In the latter case this recommendation may be made where it is deemed by the Centres Panel that a MQRC is no longer functioning adequately against the Centre milestones and expectations of the scheme or where the Panel deems that the Centre has not clearly articulated a strategy for the additional three years. In these cases a recommendation for disestablishment may be made through the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research). The relevant Executive Dean/s of Faculty/s and Centre Director will be given the opportunity to comment on the review committee's recommendation.
Macquarie University Research Centres (MQRC) are expected to support high quality research that is aligned with Macquarie’s Strategic Research Framework, that contributes to regional and national research objectives, and which promotes national and international collaboration in achieving these objectives. MQRCs are expected to perform functions aimed at strengthening, extending and promoting the research of members, enhancing the research training activities of students, and building research linkages both nationally and internationally. Functions might include:

- attract funds from the public and private sectors to help support the University’s research program;
- focus the activities of its research staff and students, and in so doing, use available research infrastructure more efficiently;
- foster collaborative research efforts between individuals and research teams within and outside the MQRC;
- encourage inter-disciplinary approaches to particular research problems;
- establish and maintain regional, national, and international links with individuals and teams conducting research in similar, or complementary fields;
- complement and enrich the higher degree/research training programs of the University;
- where possible, strengthen the links between research activities and teaching within the various Departments/Faculties of the University;
- enhance the status of the University by raising the level and public profile of research activity;
- provide opportunities for the professional development of staff, particularly new and early career researchers; and
- undertake research and consultancy activities on behalf of industry, government, the community, and the region.