

Faculty of Science and Information Technology  
RESEARCH & RESEARCH TRAINING COMMITTEE  
**EARLY CAREER ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

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The Faculty ECA grant scheme is intended to support and encourage new staff who have not yet had an opportunity to establish a competitive profile for funding at the University of Newcastle.

**Definition of an Early Career Academic (ECA):**

The Faculty of Science and Information Technology defines an Early Career Academic (ECA) to be an academic who satisfies the following criteria:

1. Is currently employed at level A or B;
2. Is either:
  - A. Within the first five years of their appointment \* (or full-time equivalent) to The University of Newcastle as a Lecturer A or B and, at appointment, held a PhD qualification;
  - B. While holding an academic position (Lecturer A or B) at The University of Newcastle and within the first five years of completing a PhD.
  - C. While holding an academic position (Lecturer A or B) at The University of Newcastle and currently studying for a PhD which is to be submitted within the next twelve months.
3. Holds or has held at most one large external competitive grant, and where an external competitive grant is or has been held, that grant must have been funded via the granting body's early career support (or equivalent) scheme.

\* For contract positions of less than two years duration, ECA status will commence at the point of permanency or as agreed to between the staff member, the Head of School and the convenor of the Faculty Research Committee.

Research academics and post-doctoral research fellows **do not qualify for ECA status**.

**Distinction between Early Career Researcher and Faculty Early Career Academic Program:**

The University of Newcastle Research Committee and granting bodies such as the Australian Research Council define an Early Career Researcher to be an academic who is within five years of the date of completion of a research higher degree.

Most first-time academic appointments in the Faculty of Science and Information Technology are excluded from the RC/ARC Early Career Researcher definition. Yet these very individuals often bring world-class expertise in the latest research thinking and methodology to the University. Recognition of this expertise led to the Faculty's alternative Early Career Academic definition and the accompanying program to facilitate the establishment and growth of the research of these individuals at Newcastle. The Early Career Academic cohort represents some 20% of the total academic population in the Faculty of Science and Information Technology. This group is recognised as a vital component of the Faculty's research activities and profile. Formal recognition is achieved via representation on the **Faculty Research & Research Training Committee (FRRTC)**. In addition, the Early Career Academic group meets periodically to discuss strategies for achieving productive research outcomes during the early years of appointment, mentoring and other issues raised by members which are convened by the Early Career Academic representative on the FRRTC.

The Faculty's Strategic Plan identifies enhancement of research contribution and research training as important. To achieve this objective, the Faculty has put in place a number of initiatives directed at Early Career Academics. These initiatives are intended to complement research assistance received from their home School and schemes administered by the Research Committee.

The overall goal of the Faculty initiatives is to provide Early Career Academics with adequate research support for them to be able to establish an internationally competitive research program within three to five years from the commencement of the program. Thus, it is incumbent on each Early Career Academic to demonstrate a commitment to establishing their research on a long-term basis. Funding under this category is not an automatic right on fulfilling the definition of an Early Career Academic. The FRRTC must be convinced that the

Early Career Academic will be well positioned to obtain substantial external support after a maximum of 5 years as outlined in their submitted Research Plan (see below).

### **Early Career Academic Funding Schemes:**

The Faculty offers a number of funding schemes to assist ECAs in developing their research profile and developing research collaborations. These include:

- **ECA Teaching Relief Grant (PhD Candidate)**
- **ECA Teaching Relief Grant (PhD Holder)**
- **ECA Networking/Conference Grant (PhD Holder)**

**A maximum amount of \$50,000 per annum is normally available to support Teaching Relief and Networking/Conference Funding applications.**

This amount will be allocated competitively depending on the quality of the application, the importance of the proposed funding to the ECA's capacity to achieve research goals outlined in their Research Plan, and with consideration for equitable distribution of funds across ECAs.

Each ECA may receive a **maximum of \$7000** in Teaching Relief and/or Networking/Conference Funding over the term of their ECA status. ECA's who are currently studying for a PhD may access no more than \$3500 of this funding prior to completion of their PhD, and access to the remaining funding is contingent on completion of the appendix section of the PhD Candidate's ECA Application Form.

The relative allocation of Teaching Relief and Networking/Conference Funding is flexible. Each ECA can request allocation of funds fully for Teaching Relief, fully for Networking/Conference Funding or distribute the funds across the two schemes. Their preference will need to be justified with reference to how this will assist in the achievement of research goals outlined in their Research Plan.

This funding will be allocated competitively and based on the limitation of \$50K per annum available for these schemes.

**BEFORE BEING ELIGIBLE TO ACCESS ANY OF THE EARLY CAREER ACADEMIC SCHEMES, EACH EARLY CAREER ACADEMIC MUST HAVE A FIVE (5) YEAR RESEARCH PLAN APPROVED BY THE PVC ON THE ADVICE OF THE FRRTC.**

### **ECA Research Plan:**

The Research Plan should be completed using the one of the following forms:

- **ECA Research Plan (PhD Candidate) Application Form**
- **ECA Research Plan (PhD Holder) Application Form**

The content of the submitted research plan must be presented in a form comprehensible to an informed reader outside the field of the applicant. Research plans should be set in no smaller than eleven point font.

### **Progress Reports:**

The majority of the reporting required for ECA funding is subsumed by the request procedures for the Teaching Relief and Network/Conference Funding programs. However, a 2 to 3 page progress report is required at the end of the third year of funding. This report will indicate progress relative to milestones identified in the Research Plan presented with the original application, and will outline external grant activity including brief details of any unsuccessful applications or funding received. A final report is also required upon completion of tenure as an ECA.

All reports should be accompanied by comments from the School FRC representative.