

UNE Internal Research Funding Scheme (UNE IRFS)

Round: 2026 for projects commencing 2027

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

1. Introduction

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) advises that UNE strategic research funding will be made available through the UNE Internal Research Funding Scheme to support high-quality projects that build UNE's research strength, both now and into the future.

This Program is designed to strengthen UNE's longer-term research profile by funding pilot, exploratory, and capability-building work that is credible, feasible, and positioned to generate new partnerships and external grant-ready outcomes.

UNE IRFS will support the following types of grants:

Launch

Amount: up to \$5,000

Eligibility: early-* and ^mid-career researchers (EMCRs)

Propel

Amount: up to \$10,000

Eligibility: early- and mid-career researchers (EMCRs)

Momentum

Amount: \$7,000

Eligibility: researchers on a previously unsuccessful but highly ranked (top 10% of unfunded) ARC or NHMRC application.

The choice of grant applied for 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 2026, less than 5 years since conferral of PhD, excluding research career interruptions.

^Mid-career researcher definition: as of 1 October 2026, between 5 and 15 years since conferral of PhD, excluding research career interruptions.

2. Aims of the Program

UNE IRFS prioritises projects that demonstrate momentum towards competitive external funding and measurable research impact. Accordingly, the Program aims:

2.1. To strengthen UNE's future success in external competitive research funding by supporting EMCRs to undertake pilot, exploratory and capability-building research that will lead to high-quality, UNE-led grant applications (Launch, Propel).

2.2. To support the refinement and resubmission of highly ranked, but unsuccessful, peer-reviewed applications to major external competitive funding schemes (Momentum).

2.3. To enhance UNE's research impact by supporting projects that align with the University's strategic research priorities and build capability in areas of existing or emerging research strengths.

2.4. To encourage research collaborations that strengthen the project's potential for future competitive funding and research impact. Collaborations beyond academia could involve community, industry and/or government.

3. Funding Allocations

3.1. The University will provide several EMCR grants, capped at either \$5,000 (Launch) or \$10,000 (Propel) each. Applicants are required to submit a well-justified budget which represents good value for money. Total funding for the Program will be subject to availability.

3.2. Funding requested may not be awarded in full if the UNE IRFS Review Panel deems components non-essential to the completion of the project, of a minor nature, and/or are not satisfactorily justified.

3.3. In relation to Aim 2.2, the University will provide near miss funding of up to \$7,000 per relevant application. The allocation of this funding will require a budget justification and DVCR (or Delegate) approval. Individual applicants should contact the Grants team in the first instance.

4. Eligibility

4.1. Lead applicants must be a UNE staff member, aligned with a Faculty, UNE Research Centre or Institute, hold a PhD and meet the relevant EMCR criteria listed above.

4.2. EMCRs who are claiming research career interruption/s for eligibility purposes will be required to gain approval from the Research Services' Grants team prior to submitting to the UNE IRFS Program.

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

4.4. The following staff are eligible to be part of the research team but NOT as a lead investigator:

- Level E (Professor)
- Adjunct staff based at UNE
- Adjunct or other academic and research staff at other institutions.

4.5. Level D staff can apply if they can demonstrate eligibility in line with EMCR definitions.

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 UNE IRFS grant. Research team applications may include in-kind contributions from 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 IRFS application. However, they may be part of a team on other UNE IRFS applications per funding round.

4.8. Past recipients of UNE IRFS funding (or any former iteration of the UNE Internal Funding Scheme) are not eligible to re-apply for 3 years, regardless of whether the awarded project was completed or funds were not expended in full.

5. Criteria for Selection

5.1. The primary criteria used for assessment are:

Quality of the project – 25%

- Quality of the proposed research project, including novelty, methodology and feasibility, including value for money.

Team Capability – 25%

- Research track record of the applicant and team, including outputs, grants, and collaboration history.
- Strength and relevance of collaboration/s.

Strategic Alignment – 25%

- Demonstrated alignment of the project with UNE's [Research Enterprise and Engagement Plan](#).
- Alignment of the project with disciplines of strategic significance to UNE

Future Outcomes and Impact – 25%

- Demonstration of a pathway to improved competitiveness of applicant (and team) when applying to external funding schemes (e.g. previous near misses in external rounds, track record enhancement, new collaboration establishing outputs etc.).

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 or Delegate.

6.2. Funds must only be used on approved budget items, as outlined and justified in the application. Where the UNE IRFS 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 and the awarded amount will be reduced accordingly. This will be communicated to the UNE IRFS grant recipient prior to commencement of the project.

6.3. Allowable expenditure may include, but is not limited to:

- research consumables and laboratory supplies;
- fieldwork, travel and associated costs directly related to undertaking the research project;
- access to specialised research facilities or technical services;
- participant reimbursement and incentives (e.g. gift cards), where ethically appropriate, well justified and directly related to the research;
- venue hire, catering and other reasonable hosting costs associated with research activities, including workshops, discussion groups, stakeholder engagement and culturally appropriate activities, where these are integral to the project;
- specialised software licenses required to undertake the research, provided they comply with UNE procurement and information technology requirements;
- equipment that is essential to the completion of the project and appropriately justified in the application budget.
- Conference attendance only where directly integral to the project/team's development or dissemination strategy and capped at 20% of total funds awarded for the project.

6.4. Non-allowable, and non-reimbursable, budget items include but are not limited to:

- salary:
 - i. supplementation for existing UNE staff
 - ii. casual or otherwise for non-UNE personnel working internationally on the project
- teaching/marking relief
- contingencies
- minor items such as stationery, personal items; toiletries; alcohol; gratuities; phone and internet costs

- 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 IRFS Program 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 IRFS grant. It is not a requirement that they are named as lead on the external competitive funding application, but they must be named on the team. The external funding source should also represent a significant return on investment to UNE.

6.6. ECR applicants must identify a UNE senior academic who will provide mentorship throughout the UNE IRFS Round. The UNE senior academic will be required to endorse the ECR's application to the UNE IRFS 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](#) 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 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. 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. It is the responsibility of the grantee to notify the Research Services' Grants team of their resignation to ensure all due procedures are followed.

8.4. Funds will be awarded and allocated to the relevant project code in December 2026 for use from January 2027. Funds must be expended within 12 months, i.e., by end December 2027. Please note that extensions will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. A justification is to be emailed to the Research Services' Grants team (grants@une.edu.au), who will seek DVCR or Delegate advice and notify the grantee of the outcome.

8.5. If a variation to the project is required (e.g., extension to end date, change to budget etc.), the grantee should seek approval from the DVCR or Delegate via email to the Grants team (grants@une.edu.au), who will notify the grantee of the outcome. Please note that any such requests will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and must be consistent with the UNE IRFS guidelines.

8.6. Any equipment purchased through a UNE IRFS 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 Internal Research Funding Scheme Review Panel and will be assisted in review of the proposals by a panel with relevant expertise as determined by the DVCR. The UNE IRFS Review Panel will make recommendations to the DVCR regarding the outcomes for applicants.

9.2. ECR applications will be assessed separately from 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 Launch and Propel 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 IRFS Review Panel.

9.4. Outcomes and any special conditions will be provided to the lead applicants by the Research Services Grants team.