



EMCRA Collaborative Award 2019

Instructions to Applicants

ELIGIBILITY

A minimum of two applicants are required (up to four) from at least two distinct Departments within the School of Biomedical Sciences. All applicants must be Level A or Level B with a PhD qualification, and must be a member of a Department within the School of Biomedical Sciences by the 1st of July 2019. Honorary members of SBS departments are not eligible. New collaborations will be viewed favourably. Applicants with previous or current collaborations are also eligible to apply.

An applicant may only be named investigator on one application for this award during the current round. Previous awardee's are eligible to apply, although it must be for a different collaboration to previous applications (i.e. cannot include investigators co-named on previous applications). Members of the SBS EMCRA Steering Committee, including the Scientific Sub-Committee are eligible to apply.

SELECTION CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT

Applications will be reviewed by an independent panel comprised of early to mid-career researchers. This will be overseen by the EMCRA Scientific Sub-committee which is made of a minimum of 1 or 2 EMCRs (Level A or B) from each Department within the School of Biomedical Sciences. Applications will be assessed according to the selection criteria, and ranked based on their selection criteria scores. The top-ranking applications will be awarded funding subject to the level of funding required, with a minimum of \$10K to be awarded per successful application. Applications will be assessed on the following Selection Criteria:

- Executive Summary (weighting: 10%)
- Collaboration Details (weighting: 20%)
- Research Plan (weighting: 50%)
- Outcomes (weighting: 20%)

Section 2: Executive Summary (Weighting: 10%)

Applicants should be able to demonstrate their respective area(s) of expertise, and their ability to work within a team to complete a research project. Reference should be made to their PhD studies, and subsequent postdoctoral training, including conference/seminar presentations (selected abstract, invited abstracts), publications, student supervision, administrative responsibilities and public/external engagement activities.

It is expected that each applicant will be assessed a score out of 5. For applications with >2 applicants, scores out of 5 will be normalised.

Section 2.1: Relative to opportunity / Career disruption: Career disruption and/or any situations which may have limited opportunities during the course of applicants' career will be taken into account.

Section 3: Collaboration Details (Weighting: 20%)

Section 2.1-3.3: Previous or current collaboration

New collaborations will be favoured. Current or previous collaborations will be considered based on their level of involvement and success in publication/funding. Current/previous collaborations that are proposing a project distinct from their current/previous collaboration will be favoured, as will current collaborations that have yet to produce publications or receive funding together. Previous publications with a co-applicant may not be viewed negatively if it can be justified why this application should be considered a new collaboration.

It should be clear that the collaboration has been generated by the applicants and is not driven by their supervisor. Where a collaboration between labs has existed and produced publications prior to the applicant(s) joining the lab(s), the collaboration will be considered as one that has no publications/funding if it is demonstrated that the project is generated by the applicants.

Applicants that have received multi-year grants together on related projects as named CIs are eligible, but may not score highly in this section.

Please note that the 20% weighting will only be applied to Section 3.4. While new collaborations will be favoured, a specific weighting on previous collaborations will not be provided. Rather, this information will be used by the panel to understand the nature of any existing collaborations.

Section 3.4: Applicant roles – *What is each applicant contributing? Does the project use the applicants' areas of speciality? How does the project use each applicant's area(s) of expertise? Could the project only be done if these applicants work together? Or is the project reliant on one applicant over another?*

It should be clear what each applicant will contribute to the project, and how they are the best team to carry out the research. It is not expected that the workload for the project is necessarily 50:50, but the project should absolutely require the involvement of all applicants, and should refer to their specific technical capabilities and knowledge/experience of the field as documented in their Executive Summary (Section 2). Clear intellectual contribution to the project including elements of experimental design and interpretation of the results should be attributed to each applicant. Sharing equipment/consumables/reagents is not considered an intellectual contribution.

Section 4: Research Plan (Weighting: 50%)

Scientific quality – *Is the hypothesis sound? Is this an exciting or novel experiment/approach? Why is it exciting/novel? Is it relevant to the problem described (and if so, how relevant? Conversely, if not, why is it not relevant)? Does this project add value to the field/disciplines? Does this provide a launch pad for future work? Does this project use each applicant's skills and/or expertise?*

Hypotheses should be sound and project should be relevant to the problem described. Novel approaches and projects that provide the basis for future work should be encouraged. It should also be clear how the project uses each applicant's skills and/or expertise at this point, as the primary aim of the project is to support collaboration across Departments.

Preliminary data is not required, and excessive preliminary data should be questioned in respect to the necessity of “seed” funding.

Experimental design – *Is the experimental design sound? Are the techniques easy or difficult? Have the applicants used them before? Are the analyses appropriate?*

Expectation is that the majority of applications will have a sound experimental design with appropriate controls/QC, and that downstream analyses will be appropriate to the experimental design used. *If they are not, this should be considered a major flaw.* Challenging/innovative techniques and new skills should be encouraged to build the technical capacity of the School.

Section 4.2: Feasibility – *Are the approaches able to be done in the facilities described? Are they able to be achieved within the stated time frame or will the project be ongoing? Have they acknowledged that methods may be technically challenging? Are students involved, and will they be supervised by the applicants or only an applicant’s supervisor? Do the applicants have the available time to commit to the project relative to the stated time frame?*

Acknowledgment of the limitations to feasibility of the study should be clear, if they exist. This shows that the applicants have thought carefully about how the project will be carried out, and limitations may relate to the facilities, methods, level of funding or timeframe. While funding must be spent within 12 months of award, data acquisition or analysis may be ongoing. Facilities should match the techniques to be used, and funding may be requested to use off-campus equipment/facilities, but cannot be used for travel costs or salary. It is encouraged that students be supervised by the applicants and not solely by an applicant’s supervisor.

Funds may be used for direct research costs only.

Section 5: Outcomes (Weighting: 20%)

Are the stated outcomes likely? Are the outcomes significant? Does the project lay the foundation for future work? Will the outcomes benefit the career stability/progression of the applicants?

Outcomes must be specific and directly articulated and should state how this project will enable the outcomes to be achieved. Outcomes should relate to both the applicants’ career development (e.g. conference abstract, first/senior authorship, named CI external grant application) and their research problem/discipline (e.g. novel finding, new method of analysis, etc). Projects that provide the foundation for future work will be viewed favourably.

Reporting requirements

Successful applicants will be required to present their project at a School symposium to be held in 2020 (date to be advised).

A financial report and report on the outcomes of the award will be required to be submitted to the School of Biomedical Science financial team and EMCRA Scientific subcommittee for reporting purposes (date to be advised).

Applications to be submitted via email to: sbs-emcra@unimelb.edu.au