



EMCRA Collaborative Award 2021

Funding Rules

ELIGIBILITY

1. Two or three applicants are required from at least two distinct historical Departments (i.e., those existing prior to the 2021 department consolidations) within the School of Biomedical Sciences. These are:
 - a. Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
 - b. Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics
 - c. Department of Anatomy and Neuroscience
 - d. Department of Physiology
 - e. Department of Microbiology and Immunology
- 1.1. Applicants new to the university since 2021 – and the departmental consolidation – should check their supervisors' historical department to confirm eligible collaborations as per clause 1 above.
2. All applicants must be Level A or Level B, and must hold a PhD (received their Letter of Award) by the closing date.
3. All applicants must be a member of a Department within the School of Biomedical Sciences (holding at least 50% fractional appointment) by the closing date. Honorary members of SBS departments are not eligible.
4. Applicants with previous or current collaborations are eligible to apply, but new collaborations will be given priority.
5. An applicant may only be a named investigator on one application for this award during the current round.
6. Previous awardees are eligible to apply but cannot include investigators co-named on previous successful applications.
7. Members of the SBS EMCRA Steering Committee, including the Scientific Sub-Committee are eligible to apply.

Note: any applicant unsure of their eligibility should contact SBS EMCRA with any queries, prior to submitting an application (via email: sbs-emcra@unimelb.edu.au).

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 EMCRs (Level A or B) from within the School of Biomedical Sciences. Applications will be assessed according to the selection criteria (below), and ranked based on these scores. Scores may be subjected to normalisation between reviewers to account for disparate scoring standards. The four applications ranked most highly will be awarded \$15,000 each.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Applications will be assessed on the following Selection Criteria:

- Career Summary (weighting: 10%)
- Research Plan (weighting: 50%)
- Outcomes (weighting: 20%)
- Applicant Roles (weighting: 20%)

Section 3: Career Summary (Weighting: 10%)

Applicants should be able to demonstrate their respective area(s) of expertise (i.e., those relevant to successful completion of their proposed research project) 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, funding, 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 3.1: Relative to opportunity / Career disruption: Career disruption and/or any situations which may have limited their opportunities during the course of applicants' career will be taken into account, excluding impacts due to COVID-19.

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 are encouraged. Preliminary data may be included, but is not required. Excessive preliminary data will be questioned with 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 are 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. Student involvement and direct supervision by the applicants is encouraged.

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.

Section 6: Applicant roles (Weighting: 20%)

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: i) what each applicant will contribute to the project, and; ii) how/why the collaboration will help achieve the anticipated research outcomes which may not otherwise be possible (i.e., in the absence of this collaboration). It is not expected that the workload for the project is exactly equal (i.e., 50:50 division of workload if there are two applicants collaborating), 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 Career Summary (Section 3). 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.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Formatting

Indicated page limits (denoted in headings and a solid line where applicable) must be strictly adhered to. The application should be completed in size 12, Times New Roman font. Figure text and legends must be legible.

Nature of collaborations

New collaborations are encouraged. While existing (previous or current) collaborations are still eligible to apply, they will attract a penalty based on the nature and extent of the collaboration determined at the discretion of EMCRA, based on information provided in

Section 2: Collaboration Details. Minor existing collaborations will receive a scoring penalty of 1 position in final ranked scores. Major existing collaborations will receive a scoring penalty of 2 positions in final ranked scores. *Section 2: Collaboration Details* is not included in the Selection Criteria and will not be externally assessed, hence the nature of collaboration will not otherwise influence scoring.

Current or previous collaborations will be considered based on their level of involvement and success in publication/funding (including named CI, AI, etc). Proposed projects that are distinct from current/previous collaborations will be favoured. 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. Where research groups have previous or existing collaborations, applicants can describe if and how the proposed project is independent of this collaboration.

Reporting requirements

Successful applicants will be required to present their project at a School symposium to be held in 2022 (date to be advised). A brief written report on the outcomes of the award will be required to be endorsed by local heads-of-departments and submitted to EMCRA for reporting purposes by end of 2022 (template to be provided).

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