

A Research Support Scheme for the Department of Mathematics and Statistics

by Research and Graduate Studies Committee

Revised June 2006

1 Introduction

This document outlines the Research Support Scheme (RSS), which started in October 2003. The criteria and expectations will continue to evolve with time.

The RSS provides funding to support specific research activities, such as conference travel and registration, visiting colleagues, supporting colleagues' visits to the department, software and book purchases. The RSS specific objectives are

- to help research higher degree students travel and present their work at conferences or facilitate University exchanges
- to help departmental members develop their research careers
- to encourage departmental members to take responsibility for obtaining their own funding for their research activities, and
- to reward activities that help the department meet its research and supervisory targets.

Since the funding is for small research projects, \$5000 is the maximum request that can be made. For supporting visitors with significant expenses, other funding sources need to be determined and negotiated to cover the majority of the funding. You are encouraged to do this before applying for RSS scheme – this scheme can support the minority of the funding required.

It should be noted that funding for vacation scholars is not part of this scheme and will be administered separately.

In the past, some funding has been accessed by a relatively small number of members of the department, and its distribution has not been transparent. For some time now, PhD students have had access to funding for conference travel or exchanges, but such activities have not been systematically documented. Such travel activities by postgraduate students will continue to be encouraged.

In general, funding to conferences is contingent on presentation of a paper/seminar.

The purpose of this paper is to define the principles and objectives of a Departmental Research Support Scheme. In its annual budgeting process, the departmental management committee will allocate to the RSS a sum of \$60,000 per annum.

2 Background

Research activities are of central importance to the Department. The research careers of all its members should be fostered. The Department wishes to provide an environment and culture conducive to the development of good researchers. This involves maintaining strong research activities within the department, such as seminar series and joint working groups, mentoring of junior staff and ensuring that department members can access funding to support their research development.

Since we think of ourselves to be amongst the best research mathematics and statistics departments in the country, it is reasonable to expect academic members of the department to be capable of attracting research funding from external sources, be it the Australian Research Council, other government research support schemes, international exchange schemes, overseas funding bodies or industry.

It is in the interests of the department that those with a reasonable expectation of success apply for such funding on a regular basis. It is also in the interests of the department that those who do not have such an expectation of success, obtain help to develop their research careers to the point where they do have such an expectation.

More generally as part of a research intensive institution, the Department is expected to meet research performance targets in terms of the grants we receive, our research outputs and our supervision of higher degree by research students.

The Department encourages staff to take responsibility for their own research support. In November 2004, the Department developed a mentoring scheme to help applicants write successful external grant applications. The RSS is intended to encourage staff to apply for external funds annually, to supervise research students and provide a safety net for research support.

3 Budget

The RSS will have two components – one for research higher degree students and the others for members of staff.

As is current, PhD students will continue to be encouraged to foster links national and internationally. Some students have an annual maintenance allowance associated with their PhD scholarship (eg Centre of Excellence PhD students have \$3000 per annum), and such students are expected to draw on these funds before requesting funding from this scheme. For those students without such maintenance allowance, funds to PhD students will still be available from the scheme. The scheme will have some flexibility built into it, so that a student is able to request total funding above the historical allocation of \$2400 during their enrolment period. All RHD students are encouraged to spend some time overseas during their candidature. The School of Graduate Studies runs several schemes for such travel and should be investigated and applied for in conjunction with request for RSS funding.

Airfares should be quoted at discount fare rates.

4 How to apply

The scheme runs all year around. The scheme needs to ensure that applications are submitted and funding granted in sufficient time for applicants to arrange the necessary expenditure for the research activity. The RSS Committee will respond to an application within one month of submission. Therefore sufficient lead-time must be built into the application, so that conference registration, airfares etc can be booked and paid for after funding has been approved.

Applications for each round should be sent to Chair of Research and Graduate Studies Committee. Ideally, they should be submitted a few months before the conference etc. There will no longer be any formal application due dates, expect for conferences like ANZIAM, where there are numerous applicants.

Departmental members and research and higher degree students wishing to access the funding will make an application on a form designed for the purpose by the Research and Graduate Studies Committee. On the form, applicants will have to describe the particular activity for which they want funding, provide an accurate budget and timetable for expenditure of the funds and explain how they meet the selection criteria for the scheme (see below).

Successful applications will be funded at a level that will allow the research activity to take place. This will usually mean that successful applications will be funded in full. On completion of the activity, the applicant will be required to supply a one-page report detailing outcomes of the conference/research, with some reflections of the experience, as well as confirming how the money was spent.

For example, for a conference visit, registration, airfares, accommodation and conference dinner should be itemised in the budget. For successful applications, these items will be paid for by the Department using departmental credit cards. A per diem should not be requested for daily living expenses. Instead, reasonable incidental expenses, eg for dining/food, taxi fares etc, will be paid on your return after presentation of appropriate documentation and full receipts.

5 Application assessment

Applications will be assessed by a sub-committee of the Research and Graduate Studies Committee. Members of this sub-committee should be senior members of the department who have access to their own research funding. As such they ought not to need funding from the scheme and will not be eligible to apply for it.

The sub-committee will take into account the amount of previous funding sought from the RSS and the outcomes outlined in past RSS reports.

The sub-committee will respond to an application within one month of submission.

If there is contention for funds, the sub-committee will rank applications on the basis of the benefit that a research activity will bring to the individuals involved and the department

in terms of the amount of funding requested. The highest ranked applications will then be funded.

6 Selection Criteria

The RSS will have two components one for research higher degree students and the others for members of staff.

If conference funds are requested by higher degree research students or academic staff, funding is contingent on the applicant presenting a talk at the conference.

6.1 Higher degree by research students

To be eligible for funding under the RSS, a higher degree by research student should

- have used or committed all other possible sources of funding, for example any annual maintenance allowance and eligible School of Graduate Studies travel grants
- have submitted Departmental RSS reports for past funding.

The School of Graduate Studies has several travelling scholarships (<http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/scholarships/pgrad/travelling/index.html>), and for overseas travel Postgraduate Overseas Research Experience Scholarship (PORES) should be considered.

6.2 Academic staff

To be eligible for funding under the RSS, a member of the department should

- fit into at least one of the following five categories:
 1. be a Research Fellow (but note that Research Fellows will usually have alternative sources of funding)
 2. be a Lecturer Level A or B in the first three years of appointment
 3. be a Lecturer Level C or above in the first year of appointment
 4. have applied, either solely or as part of a team, for an externally-funded grant in the twelve months preceding their application
 5. be a supervisor of a total of at least three honours and research higher degree students
- have used or committed all other possible sources of funding, including Ledger 5 accounts

- have tried other possible sources of funding, for example conference travel support schemes, and
- have submitted Departmental RSS reports for past funding.

Research Fellows employed on external competitive grants (eg ARC Discovery) need to provide a detailed justification of why the external grant cannot cover the research activity. If funding comes from several sources this needs to be described and detailed as well.