

## **Policy on Financial Incentivisation of Externally Funded Research Projects**

### **Introduction**

Maynooth University recognises the importance of external funding to sustain and grow the research and scholarship reputation of the institution. Income for the indirect costs associated with research is also critical in sustaining the research infrastructure of the university. This policy proposes the financial incentives that will be available for academic staff who win research funding, and the funding that will derive for the departments and research institutes and centres that host the research. While the focus of this policy is on financial matters, there is also a clear acknowledgement that there are a range of matters not covered here that are essential to promoting our research culture. These include, for example, promotion criteria; sabbatical leave opportunities and appropriate mentoring.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- a) make the University's research environment more attractive to current and prospective staff;
- b) incentivise staff engagement in externally funded research by providing appropriate financial support mechanisms for successful delivery of such activities;
- c) enable the University to strategically build research capacity and infrastructure both in academic departments and in research institutes;
- d) increase overall income and contribution to the departmental, institutes and university budgets from research grants and contracts;
- e) provide a more sustainable financial framework for research for PIs, departments, and for recognised research institutes and centres. In so far as possible, local costs associated with research will be managed locally;
- f) place research development activity in the university on a more sustainable footing by making funding available for networking, teaching buy out and seed funding for early stage research activities that have potential to enhance the university's reputation and contribution to society.

The costs of doing externally funded research may be separated into direct costs and indirect costs (or "overhead"). Direct costs are costs directly related to funded research projects and may include salaries of research staff and associated PRSI and pension benefits, consumables, equipment, research-related travel, student fees and related costs. Indirect costs are real costs that are necessary for securing and carrying out funded research projects, but which are not included in the project budget. Recouping research overheads at a sustainable level is essential for providing the core central university supports for research and supporting the University's research community.

We may recognise five generally distinct types of research costs.

- a) The direct research project costs outlined above.

- b) The salaries of principal investigators, which the funding agencies generally expect the University to fund.
- c) Indirect costs which are borne by the central administration, for example, heat, light, power, library costs, the costs associated with the research development office and the research accounts office.
- d) Indirect costs which arise in the units hosting the research, for example, administrative staff and technicians, research equipment maintenance costs.
- e) In addition to these first four types, there are very real costs that are necessary for the development of a sound and sustainable research culture and community. These include networking funds, costs for seminar series, training costs for research students, and seed funding for high potential research. These are generally not eligible costs to be covered by research overheads funding, but they must nevertheless be addressed if the university is to thrive.

Use of Research Overheads funding will be audited by funding agencies, and may only be used to cover a strictly limited range of costs, e.g. space running costs, administrative and financial supports for research, redundancy costs at the end of a contract, core technical and IT supports, library costs.

**100% of research overheads recouped will be allocated to and managed for appropriate purposes by the central administration (Finance office).**

At the same time, the University will establish and maintain a **Research Incentivisation Fund (RIF)** which will have a value of **75% of research overheads** recouped each year. The rationale for a specific fund and policy on research incentivization is that we should not attempt artificially to separate and account for the various types of costs and investments.

1. The Research Incentivisation Fund will be used to support all externally funded research, development or innovation projects and contracts.
2. The fund will operate as a single payment in each financial year, and a year in retrospect of actual research grant drawdown.

### **3. Academic Departments and Membership of Research Institutes and Designated Centres**

- a) In general, PIs (i.e. those who lead research projects) will all be affiliated with a “home” academic department, and will be expected to teach in that department, carry out research and participate in its administration.
- b) PIs may also be affiliated to a research institute.
- c) There will be a small number of institute directors, and research staff members treated on an exceptional basis, who will be recognised as affiliated only to a research institute.
- d) A PI who is a member of a research institute may carry out an externally funded research project through that institute, and therefore avail of the supports and environment that may be offered by that institute (e.g. office space, administrative supports).
- e) A PI may also carry out a research project through his/her home department.

- f) In order to carry out research effectively there will have to be a range of supports for PIs in research institutes, in departments and centrally via the office of Vice President for Research, the Research Development Office and the Finance Office.

#### **Individual PI incentivisation**

4. A Principal Investigator (grant awardee) will receive an incentive fund amount equivalent to 13.5% of the RIF attributable to each grant, paid into an individual general research account. If there are two or more co-PIs the incentive payment will be shared equally between them.
5. This funding may be used to support any legitimate teaching or research purpose. It may be contributed to a departmental or research institute budget. If the funding is not used within two years then it may be reclaimed to support the central budget of the university, unless there is an investment plan agreed and approved by the Vice President for Research and Innovation.

#### **Departmental Research Culture Funding**

6. An amount equal to 40% of the research incentivisation fund attributable to the PI's projects will be allocated to their home department under control of Head of department. There will be a general expectation that funds received will be used by the Head of Department to support appropriately those PIs whose work leads to the income. The funding allocated under this policy may be used for any legitimate teaching or research purpose, including
  - Teaching buy out for staff in departments pursuing funded research projects (with the advantage that a Head will be able to pool funds accrued from a number of funded projects)
  - Travel to conferences or meetings for consortium building
  - Funding research students (stipend and fees)
  - Purchases of equipment for teaching or research
  - Administrative or technical supports
  - Bridging funds for externally funded researchers
  - Equipment maintenance

An annual report will be required from the department on how funding received has been invested, and the outcomes.

7. Any research funded buy-out will be over and above normal sabbatical considerations.
8. Where a department has an established and stable track record of securing research funding at sufficient levels for ongoing buy out, the department may apply to UE through the Faculty Dean to make a long term or permanent contract appointment using future research incentivisation funding.
9. Academics are normally expected to have a minimum of 30% of their time available for research. There is no automatic entitlement to partial or full teaching buy out support from incentivisation

funds, and it should be considered only if the overall research commitment is outside the departmental and university norms.

### **Research Institute Infrastructure Funding**

10. If a PI is also a member of a research institute or a designated research centre and the research project is carried out through the research institute or centre then an amount equal to 40% of the research incentivisation funding attributable to the project will also be allocated to the research institute or centre under control of the director. There will be a general expectation that funds received will be used by the director to support appropriately those PIs whose work leads to the income. The funding allocated under this policy may be used for any legitimate teaching or research purpose, including

- Institute administrative or technical supports
- Travel to conferences or meetings for consortium building
- Purchases of equipment for research
- Bridging funds for externally funded researchers
- Equipment maintenance

An annual report will be required from the institute or centre on how funding received has been invested, and the outcomes.

11. The relative proportion of funding to department and institute may be varied and managed by mutual agreement. Through this joint model departments and institutes are encouraged to consider how they might recognise the needs of staff requiring concentrated time to commit to large and complex (often collaborative) research grant applications.

12. In collaborative projects incentivisation funding will be distributed to relevant departments and institutes in proportion to the co-PI's inputs, spread evenly over the duration of the project.

### **Central Funding for Research Development and Enhancement**

13. The balance of the research incentivisation fund (a minimum of 6.5%) will be invested in a central research fund managed by the Office of VP Research and Innovation.

### **Direct Costs for Permanent Staff Time and Teaching Replacement**

14. This applies to those PIs whose salary is paid from the university's core budget. Where a PI's salary costs or replacement costs (buy out) are provided as a legitimate direct cost of a funded research project (e.g., H2020 based on hours committed up to a maximum of 1720, contract research, personal fellowship) the PI will normally be expected to contribute these funds to his/her home department and to have a portion of his/her teaching and/or other duties covered. The direct costs will be divided with 75% to the home department to provide

replacement of the PI's teaching and/or other duties, and 25% to the PI's General Research Account. The PI may contribute a greater amount to the home department by agreement with the Head of Department.

However, if an indirect costs contribution of less than 10% is applicable on the award, then the distribution will be 75% to the department and 25% to central funds.

A member of staff may not have more than 100% of his/her salary funded from external sources.

It is important that a high standard of teaching is maintained in the operation of this policy, and in sourcing additional teaching all relevant university policies must be observed, e.g, Policy on Engagement of Occasional Staff, Policy on Engagement of External Module Lecturers.

All of the foregoing in clause 14 is subject to it being an allowed approach under the terms of the agency that provides the funding.

15. The policy will be subject to review by the University Executive. The amounts described in the policy may be varied annually by a decision of UE and notified to the Finance, Human Resources and Development Committee.
16. This policy replaces the Policy on Research Overheads (2011).
17. Any disputes relating to the operation of the policy will be brought to the attention of the VPRI, who will decide the matter.
18. This policy will be reviewed by the Research Committee no later than October 2022.