

POLICY STATEMENT

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1. Introduction

URC Block Grants in the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment are awarded for research in the following three categories (researchers can only apply to one of the categories for which they are eligible, in any given year):

A. Emerging Researcher Funding, to assist emerging researchers who do not yet have access to independent sources of funding.

B. Research Project Funding, to support projects that open up areas of research, which potentially could lead to additional future funding. Priority will be given to projects that relate to at least one of the 5 focus areas:

1. Innovative research

- Applications need to clearly argue the novelty of the proposed research.

2. Locally relevant research

- Applications need to clearly point out how the proposed research addresses local problems and challenges.
- Applications may include projects aimed at research dissemination.

3. Interdisciplinary research within EBE

- Research projects with PIs from at least two, preferably three or more, departments in EBE, which are based on clear interdisciplinary research.

4. Sustainability

- Research projects that have a clear focus on solving problems related to the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. Transformation

- Research projects that have a clear strategy to address the issue of redress and transformation (in research / industry).

C. Research Continuation Funding, to assist individual researchers who do not have access to significant alternative funding sources to continue with their work.

D. Start-up funding for feasibility studies, (e.g., inter-disciplinary research). Successful projects are eligible to present their feasibility study the following year and apply for continuation funding (see C. above).

2. Categories

A. Emerging Researcher funding

The Faculty is committed to giving its emerging researchers every chance of succeeding in a productive research career. Emerging researchers are currently awarded a University Block Grant (currently R20 000) in their first year of appointment. It is the Faculty's intention to match this award for emerging researchers only, at R30 000 per year for a further two years, conditional on satisfactory research performance. The spirit of the award is to assist emerging researchers to move towards attaining recognisable peer reviewed research outputs.

Each emerging researcher entering their second year of appointment will be asked to:

- 1 Complete the Block grant application form (MS Word document)
- 2 Submit a progress report on the first year's research programme indicating how the grant was spent (approximately 2 pages).

Emerging researchers entering their third year of appointment should submit a progress report and the EBE research score card. Further funding for year three is dependent on satisfactory research progress.

A final report is required at the end of the URC award. The report should highlight progress made in establishing own research (maximum 4 pages). Useful indicators include participation in postgraduate supervision, peer reviewed publications, success in research funding applications, conference attendance.

Based on current statistics, it is anticipated that this category of funding will account for approximately 25% of the total EBE Block Grant funding.

B. Research Project Funding

Research Project Funding will be allocated on a competitive basis across the Faculty based on the potential of the proposed project to successfully address one of the 5 focus areas listed in the introduction (innovative research, locally relevant research, interdisciplinary research, sustainability, transformation), which potentially could lead to additional future funding.

The following guidelines apply:

1. Individuals or groups may apply, but no individual may be a Principal Investigator of more than one application.
2. Maximum grants shall be in the order of R120 000 per annum. Note that only partial funding may be available.
3. Preference will be given to projects which can be completed in a one-year time-frame, but a maximum of two years will be considered.
4. Applicants are expected to seek funding from alternative sources.

5. In the event of Faculty funding being a portion of the total funding sought, the Faculty grant will be conditional on the award of the additional funding.
6. Projects will be assessed on their merit and ability to address one (or more) of the 5 focus areas.
7. Preference will be given to applicants who were not awarded in the previous cycle.
8. Applicants are required to submit a project proposal using the EBE Block Grants Award Form. Further they must complete the EBE scorecard.

For continuation of funding in the 2nd year of the project, awardees will be required to submit a brief progress report and an indication how the previous years' grant were spent. Continued funding is conditional on satisfactorily research progress in the first year. New applications that will run concurrently with the 2nd year of a previous year's grant are not allowed.

A final report must be submitted at the end of the award. The final report (with a maximum length of 4 pages), should highlight progress made towards making the project sustainable.

It is anticipated that this category of funding will account for approximately 55% of the total EBE Block Grant funding and that a total of 6 projects are funded across EBE.

C. Research Continuation Funding

The intention of this funding is to assist individual researchers who do not have access to significant alternative funding sources to continue with their work. The maximum anticipated grant per individual is expected to be in the order of R30 000.

To qualify, researchers must meet the following criteria:

- (a) They should have scored a minimum average annual output of 1.5 EBE research points per annum, over the previous three years, for which there is evidence.
- (b) They should not have a balance of greater than R50 000 in their URC account.

To apply, researchers are required to submit the following:

- A brief motivation describing the purposes for which the funding is required.
- A budget.
- An indication of alternative potential sources of funding that have been approached.
- An EBE points scorecard over the previous three-year period indicating research outputs and the points generated.
- A statement declaring that they fall within the maximum revenue guideline.

The spirit of these awards is to assist researchers who really need the finance. In the event of an awardee receiving significant additional funding during the year, he/she would be expected to return the award.

It is anticipated that this category of funding will account for less than 10% of total EBE Block Grant funding.

D. Start-up funding for feasibility studies

Start-up funding will be considered for the early stages of planning and conceptualising interdisciplinary research within EBE. Funding will be allocated on a competitive basis based on the potential of the proposed research topic to develop in to a successful project at a later stage.

The following guidelines apply:

9. The research team needs to consist of researchers or research groups from different departments in the Faculty.
10. Maximum grants shall be in the order of R20 000 per annum. Note that only partial funding may be available.
11. Preference will be given to projects which are clearly of interdisciplinary nature. Applications need to clearly indicate the roles of the various research partners.
12. Projects will be assessed on their merit and ability to address one (or more) of the 5 focus areas listed under B (Research Project Funding)
13. Feasibility studies need to be completed within one-year.
14. Preference will be given to applicants who were not awarded in the previous cycle.
15. Applicants are required to submit a project proposal using the EBE Block Grants Award Form for start-up funding.

A final report must be submitted at the end of the award (with a maximum length of 1 page), indicating the outcome of the feasibility study and, if applicable, the plans for future research on the topic.

It is anticipated that this category of funding will account for approximately 10% of the total EBE Block Grant funding and that a total of 4 projects are funded across EBE.

3. Spending rules for URC Funding

The intention of URC funding is to provide support for use in the year directly following the allocation. For this reason, the balance carried over from previous years in an applicant's URC fund will generally be deducted from new funding allocations. Exceptions include applicants that have only been awarded New Researcher funds, and funding specifically allocated for the next year (e.g. for a research exchange or workshop happening early in the year).

Funds allocated to Project Applications and for Research Continuation Funding may only be used for certain types of expenses as detailed below:

Not allowed

- Conference attendance or travel to or from conferences (there are other sources of University funding available);
- Equipment, including computers (there are other sources of University funding available), with the exception of minor items.
- Contributions to the salaries of existing administrative or secretarial personnel.

Allowed

- Disbursements associated with the project;
- Salaries of research assistants who are not part of the academic staff;
- Top-ups to postgraduate bursaries (including foreign students), to a maximum of R20 000 each. In these cases, the student must be named and the additional amounts of funding being received must be identified in the application.

4. Application and Timing

Applications are invited from all full-time academic staff and T3 contract appointments.

Applications should be submitted electronically to the Faculty Finance Office using the email address, and by the deadline provided in the Call for Applications.

Process

Adjudications will be made by a small panel that will be constituted as a sub-committee of the Faculty Research Committee. This will occur as soon as the amount of the University (URC) allocation to the Faculty is known.

5. Adjudication of Applications

Applications will be adjudicated by the panel based on the following criteria:

- Quality of the application. Applications that are incomplete, unclear or are found to have omitted relevant information may be disqualified. Applicants must use this form and adhere to its guidelines/no attachments, over runs, etc.
- Compliance with the purposes of award categories. The purpose of URC Block grants is not to provide general research funding, but to facilitate and stimulate research in specific categories as described above. Applications not complying with the objectives of the application categories will not be funded, irrespective of the merits of the project.
- Merit of the application. The relative merit of applications will be evaluated against the framework of the purposes and rules of the different funding categories. Successful applications will be grouped by merit and allocated funds within the limitations of the available funding. Applications of higher merit may receive higher proportional allocations than applications of lower merit.