Introduction to writing a research grant application

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Developing an overview

• State the problem;

• Identify the key aims, objectives and/or research questions you need to study to address the problem;

• Establish why the problem is important and where it fits into the context of current research in your discipline;

• Set out how you will go about addressing your aims or answering your research questions;

• Do you have all the expertise necessary and time available to carry out the study? If not, who do you need to help you?

• What do you expect to result from the study?

• What costs are likely to be involved?

• How long will the study will take and when you want to start?
Identifying a funding scheme

Resources

• Networks – Supervisor, peers, colleagues

• Acknowledgements sections of academic papers or conference presentations

• Web based funding opportunities databases: COS, SPIN, Jason

• RMIT Research Alert

• Me!
Identifying a funding scheme

Factors to consider:

• Is funding provided for the type of project you are proposing?

• What are the objectives of the funding body?

• Are you eligible to apply?

• check the amounts awarded

• What are the closing dates?

• Do you have time to prepare an application? Remember to allow plenty of time to prepare your application before the internal & external deadlines
Before you start to write:

• Read the instructions, guidelines or supplementary information the funding body provides taking careful note of:
  
  i. any specific instructions on how to prepare the application (font size, margins, character or word lengths and other formatting) and whether there is an application form, what attachments are permitted, etc;
  
  ii. any priority areas or ‘preferred’ areas for funding

  iii. what the selection/assessment criteria are and who the selection panel will be (are they expert academic readers, or non expert academic readers or educated non academic readers?)

• and as far as possible frame your application accordingly.

• Avoid giving non-expert readers technical terms or jargon.

• Spell out acronyms the first time
Standard elements of a grant application

- Title
- Summary
- Budget
- Proposal
- Team
Track record:

Publications – If they are good demonstrate their quality using impact factors, citation rates, ERA journal ranking

Prizes and Awards – include indication of prestige if good (e.g. Awarded best oral student presentation at international conference, out of 200 student competitors)

Research income obtained – external grants are more highly regarded than internal grants from your institution

Professional activities – editorial responsibilities, etc

Evidence of international reputation – invited key note presentations, invitation to collaborate with international leaders

To convince assessors, claims must be supported with evidence or qualification.
Common elements of a grant proposal:

• **Aims / Objectives** – clear succinct statement of aims or dot points.

• **Background** – places proposal in context relevant to research discipline. Demonstrates your knowledge of the research discipline.

• **Significance** – why the study needs to be done, why now, why this organisation should fund it, why the problem needs solving.

• **Approach or Research Design** – what you will do, when, how. Detail should be sufficient to convince experts that you are competent and the project is feasible. Include timeline.

• **Outcomes and Benefits** – what will result from the study? What are the potential benefits. Must be convincing.
## Simple budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel (Salaries + On-costs)</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Fellow Level A increment 06 1FTE ($60,069 + 29.308% on costs)</td>
<td>$77,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Research Assistant 1 x 144 hours @ $26.20 per hour + 16.1% on costs</td>
<td>$4,381</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equipment</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leica Binocular microscope with polarising lens and camera attachment</td>
<td>$3,650</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maintenance</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Microscope slides 5 boxes @ $15 each</td>
<td>$75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coverslips 3 boxes @ $25 each</td>
<td>$75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedding solution and grinding powder for preparation of microscope samples</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographic developing solutions</td>
<td>$300</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travel</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 x economy airfare Melbourne-London return</td>
<td>$2,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per diem $205 per day for 14 days London</td>
<td>$2,870</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accomodation: 14 days @ $250 per night London</td>
<td>$3,500</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL COSTS</th>
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<tr>
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<td>$82,001</td>
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The first things assessors will read…

Title:
• Descriptive and meaningful
• Short and succinct
• Memorable

Summary:
• Includes all the key information: aims, significance, benefits and expected outcomes
• Inspires the assessor to continue reading
• Convinces the assessor that the project must be funded
• Takes time and thought to prepare
Second draft, and third, 4th, 5th, etc etc

• Allow plenty of time to write and rewrite the proposal
• Ask someone to read your proposal and provide advice
• Perform final checks & submit the application

Cross your fingers!
Outcome

Response from funding body:

• If successful, celebrate!

• If not, take note of reviewers comments, revise application and resubmit if possible.