CHAPTER 7 GRANTS TO SUPPORT RESEARCH BY, AND THE RESEARCH CAPABILITY OF, HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS (HEPS)

7.1 Research Infrastructure Block Grants (RIBG)

7.5 Purpose

7.5.1 The purpose of these guidelines is to specify, in accordance with s41-15(1) of the Act, RIBG as a programme under which grants can be paid for the purpose of supporting HEPs' research and research training activities and to specify other matters relevant to RIBG for the purposes of s41-15(2) of the Act.

7.10 Programme Description

7.10.1 RIBG provides block grants, on a calendar year basis, to eligible HEPs to enhance the development and maintenance of research infrastructure.

7.15 Extra Conditions of Eligibility (s41-10(2)(b))

7.15.1 There are no extra conditions of eligibility.

7.20 Programme Objectives (s41-15(2)(a))

7.20.1 The objectives of RIBG are to:

- enhance the development and maintenance of research infrastructure in HEPs for the support of high quality research in all disciplines;
- meet project-related infrastructure costs associated with Australian Competitive Grants;
- remedy deficiencies in current research infrastructure; and
- ensure that areas of recognised research potential, in which HEPs have taken steps to initiate high quality research activity, have access to the support necessary for development.

7.25 Conditions that Apply to RIBG (s41-15(2)(g))

7.25.1 RIBG funds can only be applied for the following purposes:

- non-capital aspects of facilities such as libraries, laboratories, computing centres, animal houses, herbaria, experimental farms;
- equipment purchase, installation, maintenance, hire and lease;
- salaries of research support staff (including research assistants; accounting and administrative staff; and technicians) employed to provide general support activity in a given area (e.g. a research assistant providing support for a number of research projects but not a research assistant dedicated to a particular project); and
- provide for travel costs to allow participation in international consortia.

7.25.5 RIBG funds must not be used to fund:

- capital works (i.e. construction of buildings);
- rental of accommodation;
- salaries of teaching and research, and research-only academic staff (including the cost of “buying time” to free such staff to do more research);
- salaries of staff supporting research and at the institutional level (e.g. Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Research Grants Officer);
- stipends of postgraduate research students; and
- travel costs directly associated with individual projects (with the exception of travel costs to allow participation in international consortia).

7.30 The Method by which the Amount of Grants under RIBG will be Determined (s41-15(2)(e))

7.30.1 In accordance with s41-15(2)(e) of the Act this section sets out the method by which the amount of grants under RIBG will be determined.

7.30.5 RIBG is allocated according to the relative success of each HEP in attracting research funds, as calculated from schemes in the Australian Competitive Grants Register (ACGR). The ACGR data used is averaged over the two most recent years. Grants are calculated annually.

7.30.10 Grants made through RIBG are indexed in accordance with Part 5-6 of the Act.

7.35 Institutional Grants Scheme (IGS)

7.40 Purpose

7.40.1 The purpose of these guidelines is to specify, in accordance with s41-15(1) of the Act, IGS as a programme under which grants can be paid for the purpose of supporting HEPs’ research and research training activities and to specify other matters relevant to IGS for the purposes of s41-15(2) of the Act.

7.45 Programme Description

7.45.5 The IGS provides block grants, on a calendar year basis, to eligible HEPs to support research and research training activities. HEPs have discretion in the way they spend their IGS grant. The IGS may be used to fund any activity related to research.

7.50 Extra Conditions of Eligibility (s41-10(2)(b))

7.50.1 There are no extra conditions of eligibility.

7.55 Programme Objectives

7.55.1 The purpose of the IGS is to maintain and strengthen Australia’s knowledge base and research capabilities by developing an effective research and research training system in the higher education sector.

7.55.5 Specifically, the IGS aims to:
• support the general fabric of the research and research training activities of HEPs;
• allow higher education providers to manage their own research activities and set their own priorities;
• assist HEPs to respond flexibly to their research environment in accordance with their own strategies; and
• enhance support for areas of research strength.

7.60 The Method by which Amount of Grants under the Program will be Determined (s41-15(2)(e))

7.60.1 In accordance with s41-15(2)(e) of the Act this section sets out the method by which the amount of grants under the IGS will be determined.

7.60.5 The IGS funding formula operates in conjunction with a safety net (see section 7.65 below). The IGS pre-safety net grant is calculated using a performance-based formula comprising:
• research income data, weighted at 60 per cent;
• Commonwealth-funded research student load data, weighted at 30 per cent; and
• research publications data, weighted at 10 per cent.

7.60.10 Research income and publications data are averaged over two years.

7.60.15 Grants made through the IGS are indexed in accordance with Part 5-6 of the Act.

7.65 Safety Net

7.65.1 To minimise adverse impacts on HEPs, a safety net is applied to IGS grants. The safety net measure ensures that a HEP’s IGS grant will not fall below 95 per cent of its previous year’s grant indexed to current prices.

7.65.5 The pre-safety net grant is used to determine whether a HEP has lost or gained funds from their previous year’s indexed IGS grant. All gains are placed into a pool from which funds are drawn to provide a safety net to HEPs that have realised a loss greater than 5 per cent. The funds remaining in the pool are then returned to HEPs that gained, based on their percentage contribution to the pool.

7.65.10 For example, Provider X’s previous year’s IGS grant (indexed to current prices) was $100,000. Provider X’s IGS grant for the current year would not be able to fall below $95,000.

7.70 Regional Protection Fund (RPF)

7.70.1 The RPF helps to protect designated regional HEPs from losses they incur in total RTS and IGS grants against their 2001 baseline. The designated regional HEPs as identified in Knowledge and Innovation are:
• Charles Sturt University;
• Southern Cross University;
The University of New England;
The University of Newcastle;
The University of Wollongong;
Deakin University;
La Trobe University;
University of Ballarat;
Central Queensland University;
James Cook University;
University of Southern Queensland;
University of Tasmania; and
Charles Darwin University.

7.70.5 The RPF was established in 2001 to provide protection from 2002 to 2004. The RPF has been extended through to 2008. Funding under this programme is limited to $3 million annually indexed to current prices. The available funding will be distributed to designated HEPs in proportion to their combined RTS and IGS loss against their indexed 2001 benchmark.