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| Frequently Asked Questions |
| 2023 Victorian Cancer Agency Funding Round |

## Key Changes in 2023

**Changes to Low-Survival Cancer Philanthropic Research Fellowship scheme in 2023**

The Early and Mid-Career Research Fellowships will again incorporate a Low-Survival Cancer Philanthropic Research Fellowship scheme. This year the scheme will involve up to two additional non-financial partnerships with philanthropic organisations to provide a named fellowship to the top ranked applicant in low-survival tumour streams. Changes have been made to eligibility criteria - please see the Fellowship guidelines for more details.

**Increase in Early Career Research Fellowship value**

The total value of the Early Career Research Fellowship has been increased from $330,000 over three years to $405,000 over three years. Please see the scheme guidelines on the VCA website for further details.

**New project grant funding scheme in 2023**

This year the VCA will accept applications for a targeted call for research as part of the new Palliative Cancer Care Research Grant Scheme. Please see the scheme guidelines on the VCA website for further details.

**Changes to eligibility criteria**

Applicants must have a formal appointment with a Victorian-based Administering Organisation and/or Victorian‑based Research Organisation at the time of submission.

The option to apply for exemption from ‘years post PhD’ criteria for fellowships due to COVID-19 disruptions has been removed. Applicants can still provide details on the nature, extent, and duration of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their proposed research in their application. This information will be considered by reviewers under career disruptions.

## Eligibility Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: If my application is not led by a rural or regional area (RRMA Classifications 3-7) am I still eligible to apply for a Palliative Care Cancer Research Grant Scheme? \*NEW\* - added 11/7/23**

A: Yes. The scheme is open to researchers who meet the eligibility criteria as per the Palliative Care Cancer Research Grant guidelines and is NOT limited to just applicants from rural or regional areas. From the MULTIPLE successful applications VCA may fund, ONE grant will be awarded to the highest ranked application led by a rural or regional area that meets appropriate standards for funding.

**Q: If I have previously applied for VCA funding and been unsuccessful, can I apply again?**A: Yes. We actively encourage previous applicants to contact the VCA to receive verbal feedback on previous unsuccessful applications.

**Q: Can funding be used to extend an existing project?**A: Yes, as long as the proposal fits within the grant guidelines and indicates a discrete research objective with no duplication of funding from other sources.

**Q: If I have previously received funding from the VCA, can I apply again?**A: Generally, yes, however restrictions apply to some types of grants and fellowships. Refer to individual grant or fellowship guidelines.

**Q: I have previously held a VCA project grant (e.g., Health Services Research grant), can I apply for a fellowship?**

Yes, unless you hold or have held an Early Career Seed Grant, then you are not eligible to apply to the Early Career Research Fellowship scheme.

**Q: Can I submit more than one application per scheme?**No. You can only submit one application per scheme, per year.

**Q: If I currently hold or have held an NHMRC Investigator Grant am I eligible to apply?**

A: If you hold or have held an NHMRC Investigator Grant Leadership Levels 1-3 you are not eligible to apply to any VCA fellowship scheme.

If you are applying for an Early Career Research Fellowship you will not be eligible if you hold or have held any NHMRC Investigator Grant.

If you are applying for a Mid-Career Research Fellowship you may be eligible, however you are not permitted to concurrently hold an NHMRC Investigator Grant (Emerging Leadership EL1 and EL2) and a VCA Mid-Career Research Fellowship.

Please see individual scheme guidelines for further detail.

**Q: If I currently hold, or have held an NHMRC Ideas Grant am I eligible to apply?**

A: If you want to apply for an Early Career Research Fellowship and you are currently or previously listed as chief investigator “A” on any NHMRC Ideas grant, then you are ineligible to apply.

If you hold or have previously held an NHMRC Ideas Grant (excluding the condition above) you are eligible to apply for a VCA fellowship, provided the funding held does not duplicate the research costs requested in your VCA application and if successful for a VCA fellowship, you do not receive salary from the NHMRC Ideas Grant during the period of the VCA fellowship.

Please see individual scheme guidelines for further details.

**Q: If I have taken a career break or worked part-time, how is time counted post-PhD for the purposes of an Early or Mid-Career Research Fellowship?**  
A: The Impact of Career Disruption Statement in the application form provides an opportunity for Applicants to detail career disruptions/break relative to career stage.

During the assessment process, applications will be assessed in alignment with the NHMRC [Relative to Opportunity policy](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/policy-and-priorities) <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/policy-and-priorities> to accurately measure an applicant’s track record relative to stage of career. This includes consideration as to whether productivity and contribution is commensurate with the opportunities available to the applicant and takes career disruptions into account. Career disruptions are based on NHMRC definitions and are defined as follows:

*“A prolonged interruption to an applicant’s capacity to work, either due to parental responsibilities, major illness/injury or carer responsibilities”* and/or *“Other Relative to Opportunity considerations – any other circumstances affecting research productivity for track record assessment”*.

A career disruption period is defined as

* a continuous absence from work for 90 calendar days or more, and/or
* continuous, long-term, part-time employment (with defined per cent (%) FTE) due to circumstances classified as Career Disruption, with the absence amounting to a total of 90 calendar days or more.

The career disruption period must have occurred post the date of the letter advising that the thesis was passed and resulted in significantly reduced research productivity or nil research output.

Example of an acceptable career disruption entry:

I received my PhD 16 years and 2 months ago. I had a 12-month career break for parental leave in 2014 and worked part-time at 0.4 FTE for 6 months when I returned to work. In 2019 I worked part-time at 0.6 FTE for four months due to illness.

Career Disruption entry:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Career Disruption** | **Date from** | **Date to** | **FTE Worked** | **Days Disrupted** |
| Parental leave | 01/01/2015 | 31/12/2015 | 0.0 | 365 |
| Carer responsibility | 01/01/2016 | 30/06/2016 | 0.4 | 108.6 |
| Medical reasons | 01/09/2020 | 31/12/2020 | 0.6 | 48.4 |
|  |  | Total Disruption | | 522 |

The amount of time that has passed post-PhD will be counted so as not to disadvantage you in being able to apply. The VCA will confirm your eligibility prior to assessment of your application. You can ask your research office to contact us before applying if you are uncertain of eligibility or please see the NHMRC [Relative to Opportunity Policy](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/policy-and-priorities) <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/policy-and-priorities> and the VCA Funding Rules for further information.

Your Research Administration Office can contact the VCA before applying if you are uncertain of eligibility.

# Early Career Research Fellowship Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: I received my PhD in 2018 and I am unsure if I am eligible for an Early Career Research Fellowship?**  
A: For the purposes of eligibility, the VCA uses the date you received notification that your PhD is accepted, not the date it was conferred (i.e. at a graduation ceremony). Therefore, the time elapsed to be eligible for an Early Career Research Fellowship is the time between when you received notification and the closing date of this funding scheme (16 August 2023) and must be no more than five years, with the exception of recognised career breaks.

**Q: If I have submitted my PhD but have not yet received a result, am I eligible to apply for an Early Career Research Fellowship?**  
A: No. You are also required to have 12 months continuous post-doctoral research experience to be eligible to apply for an Early Career Research Fellowship.

**Q. Does my 12 months post-doctoral research experience need to be continuous?**   
A: Yes. You are required to have 12 months continuous research work experience at a minimum 0.6 FTE to be eligible to apply for an Early Career Research Fellowship.

**Q: I have held a VCA grant or a nationally competitive fellowship, am I eligible to apply for an Early Career Research Fellowship?**

**A:** If you have previously or currently hold as chief investigator “A” any nationally competitive funding of equal or

greater value than this fellowship (that is $135,000 per annum or an equivalent pro rata of this award) you are

ineligible to apply.

**Q: I am a medical graduate. Am I eligible for an Early Career Research Fellowship?**  
A: Yes. Medical and dental graduates working in a research capacity are eligible for Early Career and Mid-Career Research Fellowships if they meet the eligibility criteria. Medical and dental graduates intending to work part-time in a clinical role while undertaking research should refer to information on working part-time in the VCA Early Career Research Fellowship funding guidelines.

**Q: Is clinical work considered a career break for the purposes of an Early Career Research Fellowship?**  
A: Yes.

# **Mid-Career Research Fellowship Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q: I am a current holder of a Fellowship from another funding body. Am I eligible to apply for a Mid-Career Research Fellowship?**  
A: Yes, holders of fellowships from another funding body (except NHMRC Investigator Grant Leadership Levels 1‑3) may apply for a Mid-Career Research Fellowship but cannot hold both fellowships concurrently. See MCRF guidelines for more detail.

**Q: I received my PhD in 2008 and I am unsure if I am eligible for a Mid-Career Research Fellowship?**  
A: For the purposes of eligibility, the VCA uses the date you received notification that your PhD is accepted, not the date it was conferred (i.e. at a graduation ceremony). Therefore, the time elapsed to be eligible for a Mid-Career Research Fellowship is the time between when you received notification and the closing date of this funding scheme (16 August 2023) and must be no more than 15 years, with the exception of recognised career breaks.

**Q: If I have previously received a VCA Early Career Seed Grant, am I eligible to apply for a Mid-Career Research Fellowship?**  
A: Yes, provided you fulfil the other eligibility criteria within the scheme.

**Q: I am a medical graduate. Am I eligible for a Mid-Career Research Fellowship?**  
A: Yes. Medical and dental graduates working in a research capacity are eligible for Early Career and Mid-Career Research Fellowships if they meet the eligibility criteria. Medical and dental graduates intending to work part-time in a clinical role while undertaking research should refer to information on working part-time in the VCA Mid-Career Research Fellowship funding guidelines.

**Q: Is clinical work considered a career break for the purposes of a Mid-Career Research Fellowship?**  
A: Yes.

**Q: I have previously held a VCA Mid-Career Research Fellowship, can I apply again?**  
A: No. Applicants are only eligible to hold a maximum of one VCA fellowship per scheme during their career.

# General Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. COVID-19 has impacted my research, will this be taken into account?**

A: If you believe COVID-19 has significantly impacted your research, there is an opportunity to briefly describe the impact in the Impact of Career Disruption Statement section in your application and this will be provided to the evaluation panel for consideration.

**Q: Can you please advise on the suitability of my project for this funding scheme? Are there any priority areas for this funding scheme?**  
A: The VCA is unable to discuss the suitability of a project for a funding round, the VCA can only assist applicants to determine eligibility via the Research Administration Office. Please refer to the funding guidelines for any priorities the VCA has for a funding scheme.

**Q: How do I know if my project is considered translational?**

The 2023 VCA Funding Rules (Appendix 1) provide further advice and resources on defining translational research. Previously funded VCA projects are also available to view on the VCA website.

**Q: Will figure legends (image files) count towards the word count in each section of the Research Proposal document?**

A: The word limit excludes figure legends.

**Q: Can I provide references for the summary of proposed research in the application form?**A: References are required in the research proposal section of the application.

**Q: Is an FTE of 0.8 considered part-time?**

A: No, between 0.8 FTE and 1 FTE is defined as full-time.

**Q: Who can apply for VCA funding?**A: Any organisation or individual that is, or will be, involved in the conduct of cancer research in Victoria is eligible to apply for VCA funding. Applications must be made under the auspices of a Victorian hospital, research organisation or university. For specific eligibility requirements, see the guidelines provided for individual grants.

**Q: How can I apply for funding?**A: When applications are open, we provide a link for you to apply online in the current funding scheme pages on the VCA website. We do not accept applications submitted in hard copy or by email.

**Q: Who can I contact if I have any queries about applying for a specific grant?**A: Contact your Research Administering Office as the first point of contact for all funding round application related matters or visit the Funding page on the VCA website.

Website: [www.victoriancanceragency.vic.gov.au](http://www.victoriancanceragency.vic.gov.au)

For queries about using the application form, contact SmartyGrants on 03 9320 6888 during business hours or email [service@smartygrants.com.au](mailto:service@smartygrants.com.au) and quote your application number.

**Q: What is SmartyGrants?**A: The Victorian Cancer Agency uses SmartyGrants to administer our grants. SmartyGrants is an online grant management system that provides easy-to-use online application forms, as well as report management functions for successful applicants.

**Q: Will you fund research or researchers in other states?**A: We will fund collaborative research across Victoria and interstate, but the Applicant, Administering Organisation and majority of the research funded by the Victorian Cancer Agency must be based in Victoria.

**Q: Will the VCA own the intellectual property (IP) of findings?**A: No. Under VCA agreements, funded parties retain ownership of their Intellectual Property. This policy is in line with industry best practice for the management of IP for publicly funded research. The VCA does ask that findings be commercialised, where appropriate, in a manner that ensures fair and reasonable access for the Victorian public. More information is available from the Victorian Cancer Agency Funding Rules [www.victoriancanceragency.vic.gov.au](http://www.victoriancanceragency.vic.gov.au).

**Q: Will there be any feedback to the applicant following the evaluation process?**A: All applicants will be notified of whether their application was successful or not. Individual feedback can be provided verbally on request.

# Contact

For questions about the 2023 Victorian Cancer Agency Funding Round, please contact your Research Administration Office or visit the Funding page on the VCA website. Research Administration Officers may contact the VCA at the email address below.

Email: [victorian.canceragency@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:victorian.canceragency@health.vic.gov.au)

Website: [www.victoriancanceragency.vic.gov.au](http://www.victoriancanceragency.vic.gov.au)

To receive this publication in an accessible format [email the Victorian Cancer Agency](mailto:%20victorian.canceragency@dhhs.vic.gov.au) <victorian.canceragency@dhhs.vic.gov.au>

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