

HASS-Led Cross-Divisional Research Collaborations: Leading From Within

HASS disciplines make an important contribution in addressing the Grand Challenges facing society. As a comprehensive university, we are well placed to leverage the different knowledge systems of a range of disciplines within our ranks to produce answers to these challenges. However, HASS disciplines have been less successful in leading compelling cases for cross-divisional research alliances. To help address this, further support is needed to specifically foster leadership capacity within HASS for research alliances, which may involve HASS specific partnerships, or partnerships with STEM disciplines but with HASS leadership.

Proposal

That a competitive scheme be established to surface and support HASS-led¹, cross-divisional alliances that currently exist within the University and that will lead to large scale team bids for National Competitive Grants or other research funding in the future. Rather than offering an opportunity for eager researchers to generate new ideas that may result in partnerships, this scheme preferences those networks and collaborations that already exist. This should be evidenced by previous applications for research funding where all applicants are named as CIs on the bid, or through other evidence of substantial collaboration. CIs may not yet have a track record of publications, since this may be a key outcome of the scheme.

Process

All faculties will be asked to identify cross-divisional alliances with HASS leadership. The CI/s will generate a project proposal in the format provided at Appendix 1 with the signature of the proposed Initiative Chair and Faculty acknowledgement (Dean or ADR) required for submission. The proposal should describe the proposed alliance and the ambitions of outcomes from the investment. The proposal should also describe the initial team of collaborators, summarise the activities to be conducted, and outline the budget expenditure. Each faculty may be asked to nominate up to three preferred Initiatives as part of the selection process.

The DVCR, advised by a Selection Panel and informed by the faculty nominations, will determine the outcomes, and may seek further information from faculties before making a determination. In cases where more than one faculty may be an appropriate host, it will be at the DVCR's discretion to determine which faculty will be the administering faculty.

Funding

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) provided budget will be \$150k per annum for 3 years. This may be expended in varying ways to support the Initiative, but one model is to use a substantial portion of this to fund a part-time academic convenor to coordinate activity and provide the necessary intellectual and organisational focus. Any proposed support position needs to be substantial enough to provide adequate attention to the partnership and to support the existing academic partners. Faculties may offer further funding. It is anticipated that this scheme will be ongoing to allow for future bids

¹ For the purposes of this scheme, 'HASS-led' is interpreted to mean led from within a HASS-aligned faculty, being one of the faculties of Architecture, Building & Planning; Arts; Business & Economics; Melbourne Conservatorium of Music and the Victorian College of the Arts; the Melbourne Law School; or the Melbourne Graduate School of Education.

Appendix 1.

HASS Hallmark Research Initiative Expression of Interest

(Approximate length 4-5 pages)

- Name of the proposed Initiative Chair (the proposed Chair of the Steering Committee)
- Proposed name of the Initiative
- Strategic importance of the Initiative, with reference to *Research at Melbourne: Ensuring Excellence and Impact to 2025*
- Objectives of the Initiative – including:
 - Goals for the initial 3 years – covering both achievable and aspirational goals, and addressing financial outcomes and also activities designed to grow networks of researchers and external collaborators;
 - Target sources of funding to support the growth of external income relevant to Initiative research themes (include nationally competitive grant schemes, industry funding, other sources); and
 - An explanation of why the objectives cannot be achieved reasonably within existing University arrangements.
- Proposed Steering Committee membership and proposed host Faculty/School
- Evidence that the establishment of the Initiative builds on existing collaborations and strengths within the University and distributed across Academic Divisions
- Consultations held with key University participants (and potential collaborating groups where relevant) – including workshops, meetings, or other
- Proposed budget (showing major expenditure lines)
- Submission of Expressions of Interest **due by 5pm on Wednesday 28 September.**

Submitted to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)/Chancellery Research via email to robyn.may@unimelb.edu.au by:

Proposed Initiative Chair: _____

Faculty acknowledgement (Dean or ADR): _____

Appendix 2.

Typical Structure of a Hallmark Research Initiative

Hallmark Research Initiatives have a structure that provides support and coordination for cross-disciplinary research activities. The Initiatives each have individual identities, and will also be profiled as part of the Hallmark 'family' at www.hallmarkinitiatives.unimelb.edu.au with branding harmonised with that of the interdisciplinary Melbourne Research Institutes.

Leadership of a Hallmark Initiative resides with a **Steering Group**² that meets at least every two months, with members contributing time to the Initiative on a regular basis. Typically the Steering Group, after appropriate consultation, will identify a small number of **thematic research foci** for the Initiative. The Initiative funds include salary support for a part-time **Academic Convenor**³ (equiv. 0.4-0.5 time, Level B/C), typically an existing member of staff with relevant research expertise and appropriate organisational capability. Funds will be administered through a host Faculty.

The Chair of the Steering Group (termed the **Initiative Chair**) will be a senior member of academic staff active in an area relevant to the Initiative and with demonstrated facilitative leadership skills. Senior members of the Steering Group will actively identify and engage with researchers on a one to one level as well as shaping and prioritising research enabling activities, new collaborations, *etc.*

The Academic Convenor and Initiative Chair will be named on the Initiative website as first points of contact for enquiries, will help identify relevant internal and external collaborating researchers and, where appropriate, will help broker interactions with potential collaborators.

Each Initiative will receive funding from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) for 3 years in the first instance. The Steering Group budget supports modest research enabling activities (specialised to the needs of the specific Initiative, but potentially including seminars and workshops, visitor support, project seed funding) and some capacity for additional casual administrative support. Initiative budgets are set on a case-by-case basis, with a minimum provision of \$150K pa. There is no requirement for faculty co-investment but as activities mature, further investment by Deans to increase scale and accelerate the impact of an Initiative will be welcomed.

In addition to salary support for the Academic Convenor, a Hallmark Research Initiatives Project Officer (in RIC) provides administrative support across the Hallmarks to enable common activities and transfer of experiences.

Subject to Academic Board approval, some Initiatives may be aligned with a cross-faculty PhD program to aid in the building of critical mass, reinforce community building, and share professional staff resources.

² Steering Group to include: senior academics with a track record of collaborative research in relevant fields, and with demonstrated influencing capability; early or mid-career research staff; and external collaborators, as appropriate.

³ The Academic Convenor will be research active in the area of the Hallmark Research Initiative and will provide support to the Steering Group and the community around which the Initiative is formed. Under the guidance of the Steering Group, the Convenor will facilitate and support research enabling activities in selected theme areas, oversee the Initiative budget, and in conjunction with the HRI Project Officer, prepare annual activity and financial reports; work closely with research development staff in University Services and Academic Divisions as appropriate, to identify and engage with potential research collaborators and to attract research funding; and oversee planning, communication and administration of Initiative research seminars, workshops and like events.