ACADEMIC STAFF

RESEARCH SUPPORT POLICY

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Coláiste Mhuire gan Smál, Luimneach

- Ollscoil Luimnigh -

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick

- University of Limerick -

ACADEMIC STAFF

RESEARCH SUPPORT POLICY

Mary Immaculate College

Research Policy Statement

In accordance with its Mission Statement and its Strategic Plan 2012-2016, Mary Immaculate College nurtures a diversity of research traditions and paradigms. The College fosters an inclusive research community that embraces scholars of theory and practice in a range of disciplines in contemporary higher education. Research is premised on critical and inquiring approaches to the acquisition and publication of new knowledge and frames of understanding across a number of research fields and professional and public constituencies. This policy statement is a charter for research within our community of learning, where academic and professional research informs and strengthens the educational and service functions of the College within the Higher Education landscape. It provides for programmatic policy-oriented research in line with the highest standards for ethical conduct and responsibility to academic, professional and public organisations.

Through this policy Mary Immaculate College promotes, as an integral part of academic endeavour, a research ethos that is dedicated to the pursuit and publication of knowledge in our specialist fields of Liberal Arts and Education where there is a track record of research strengths. It advances an institutional research agenda with clear support structures and procedures to support the development of individual and group research, and incentivises excellence and achievement in research. This research policy encourages initiatives and innovations from all researchers to enhance the College's research portfolios, including research undertaken as a consequence of targeted or strategic agendas.

The College endorses active research partnerships with corporate, governmental, educational and philanthropic agencies in order to respond to changing national, regional and local needs, supporting socio-economic and cultural development. It provides leadership and institutional research structures that enable faculty to conceptualise, conduct and publish research, work as exchange scholars, and pursue leaves of absence for research work where applicable.

Through its Graduate School, Mary Immaculate College underwrites the highest quality standards for the supervision of research across postgraduate programmes at Doctoral and other levels.

ACADEMIC STAFF RESEARCH SUPPORT POLICY

1. Foreword

Through this policy Mary Immaculate College reiterates its commitment to the provision of support and resources for the on-going development of research and developing the research skills base and research output of our academic staff in line with the College's Strategic Plan 2012-2016. In recent times the College has invested significantly in this area through financial supports, staff up-skilling, building external collaborative links and providing dedicated in-house administrative structures. This effort will be maintained and developed further, and the integration of research with teaching and learning will be a particular focus for MIC in the coming years.

This policy sets out the terms of the main research support schemes for academic staff that will be operated by the College. These schemes will be overseen by the Associate Vice-President for Research on behalf of the College and will be operated through the Research Support Office with the advice and assistance of the College's Research Committee.

Funding for staff research support schemes will be budget sensitive, as is the case with respect to all College functions.

2. Eligibility

Except where otherwise specified below, the provisions of this policy **will** apply to

   i.   Members of the academic staff holding employment contracts of three years duration or more
   ii. For part-time members of the academic staff entitlements will be pro rata according to appropriate legislative provisions provided that the part-time staff member holds an employment contract of three years duration or more.

The provisions of this policy **will not** apply to

   i.   Staff on secondment to the College
   ii. Staff employed by the College to work exclusively on externally funded projects

3. Research Sabbatical Leave

Through this policy the College makes provisions for merit-based Research Sabbatical leave on a competitive basis. This leave will enable staff members to develop their research profiles and achieve specified research targets in the context of their personal research plans. The College will provide for the cost of substitution. The substitute will be appointed as a Postdoctoral Fellow for the leave period and will be paid the applicable rates of the Irish Research Council.

Eligibility

See Section 2.

Duration

Two sabbatical leave awards will be advertised annually and each leave period will have a duration of six calendar months. Leave periods will begin and end on dates specified by *Coiste Bainistíochta an Choláiste* (CBC)*, and sabbatical leave may not be deferred or extended.

> * Note re dates
> Leave will begin at either start of July or start of February of the given year
> The substitute will begin at either start of August or start of January of the given year. End dates for substitutes will be decided by CBC

The College will not offer research sabbatical leave unless applications demonstrate a high level of merit according to the criteria.

Criteria used in considering applications

➢ The quality of the applicant's research leave plan
➢ The discernible capacity of the applicant to deliver the planned research outcomes
➢ A sustainability plan for the applicant's research beyond the leave period
➢ The research record of the applicant

Application and Award

Research Sabbaticals are subject to a specific application process and contract which are available from the Associate Vice-President for Research. The Research Sabbatical Scheme will be administered by the Associate Vice-President for Research on behalf of the Research Committee. Final decisions on awards will be made by CBC based on the recommendations of the Research Committee.

4. Professional Research Leave

The College makes provision for professional research leave under the terms of this policy. Professional leave is allowable for research purposes that are directly related to the academic responsibilities of eligible academic staff. These are a) Professional Leave for research, leading to specific research outcomes such as publications; and b) Professional Leave for doctoral studies.

Eligibility

See Section 2.

Duration

Professional research leave may be granted for one semester. Leave periods will begin and end on dates specified by CBC. In special circumstances such leave may be extended by CBC, subject to the support of the Associate Vice-President for Research and the relevant Dean of Faculty.

Criteria used in considering applications

- The research plan of the applicant
- The value of the proposed work to a) the College, and b) the applicant
- A sustainability plan for the applicant's research beyond the leave period
- The outcomes of any previous leaves of absence of the applicant
- The support of the Associate Vice-President for Research, the relevant Dean and the Head of Department
- The numbers applying for or availing of leave a) within the College, and b) within each department / subject area

Substitution

The cost of substitution for the leave period (normally a minimum of 108 contact hours) may be provided for either: a) at the expense of the staff member, or b) through finance provided by an award from an external sponsor or funding agency.

- Where members of the academic staff are granted professional leave at their own expense, they themselves are responsible for finding a substitute acceptable to CBC and for the costs of paying the substitute. Responsibilities for, *inter alia*, lectures, tutorials, project supervision, open days, department meetings, off-campus supervision and Examination Boards must be met by the substitute. The number of paid hours per substitute must be commensurate with their workload and approved by CBC
- Where members of the academic staff are granted professional leave on the basis that external funding has been secured for purposes of substitution, the cost of substitution for teaching practice, in addition to the duties itemised above, should be met by that external funding
- In the case of Department Heads, responsibilities for all aspects of departmental administration and other relevant duties must be delegated to a named acting Head of Department who may not be the substitute. These arrangements must be made through the relevant Dean of Faculty and agreed by CBC

Application and Award

Professional Research Leave is subject to a specific application process and contract which are available from the Associate Vice-President for Research. Decisions on applications will be made by CBC based on recommendations by the Associate Vice-President for Research, the relevant Dean of Faculty and the Human Resources Manager.

5. Doctoral Fees Reimbursement

The College may agree to reimburse fees in respect of doctoral degrees undertaken by members of the academic staff where a) such staff members do not already hold such a degree; and b) the proposed degree is centrally relevant to the academic responsibilities of the applicant

Members of the academic staff holding permanent contracts with the College are eligible.

Terms

> Reimbursement will be arranged annually in arrears subject to the production of receipts and also subject to written evidence of satisfactory progress / course completion being provided by the supervisor to the Associate Vice-President for Research
> Fees will be reimbursed retrospectively up to a cumulative maximum of €12,000 subject to formal application to the Associate Vice-President for Research. Reimbursement will be subject to a formal application and contract
> Staff members who resign or retire from MIC within three years of availing of this scheme will be required to repay the fees for which they were reimbursed by the College as follows: Within 12 months: 100%; Within 24 months: 50%; Within 36 months: 25%
> Those who do not satisfactorily complete their doctoral degree shall be required to repay the fees that have been reimbursed by the College

Application and Award

Doctoral Fees Reimbursement is subject to a specific application process and contract which are available from the Associate Vice-President for Research. Decisions on applications will be made by CBC based on recommendations by the Associate Vice-President for Research.

6. Staff exchanges for research / Transfer 0f Knowledge

The College will endeavour insofar as possible to create the conditions whereby members of the academic staff may engage in short staff-exchange arrangements for research / transfer of knowledge purposes (e.g. Marie Skłowdowska-Curie Actions, Erasmus, Comenius activities). This will not involve a general scheme, and will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Staff wishing engage in such exchanges should speak initially to the relevant Dean of Faculty and the Associate Vice-President for Research.

7. Conference Fund Scheme

Through the Conference Fund Scheme, the College will support attendance at professional conferences for the purpose of presenting academic papers by a) all members of the academic staff holding a contract for at least one academic year; and b) staff for whom research forms a required element of their normal duties at MIC. These staff members may apply for up to a maximum of €1500 *pro rata* in any academic year. The College will provide for this within its core budget for research. Allocations from this fund will be made by the Associate Vice-President for Research on behalf of the Research Committee. Detailed procedures for access and applications to the scheme are available from the Research Support Office.

8. Research Seed Funding Scheme

Through the Seed Funding Scheme, the College encourages individuals and groups to apply for seed finance to support early-stage academic research projects on a competitive basis. This scheme supports a) all members of the academic staff holding a contract for at least one academic year; and b) staff for whom research forms a required element of their normal duties at MIC. The College will provide for this within its core budget for research. Allocations from this fund will be made by the Associate Vice-President for Research on behalf of the Research Committee through the use of a peer-evaluation panel. The panel will assess the merit of applications using academic, logistical and financial criteria. Detailed procedures for access and applications to the scheme are available from the Research Support Office.

9. Research Networking Scheme

The Research Networking Scheme will provide for up to five annual grants of *c.* €1000 each for purposes of research collaboration. Through this scheme, the College encourages individuals / small groups to apply for travel / subsistence support on a competitive basis for purposes of preparing collaborative funding applications to external agencies, and/or to engage in formal networks that will lead to participation in large-scale international / national funded research projects. This will be funded through the existing seed funding scheme replacing 'Inter-institutional Links'. Allocations under this scheme will be made by the Associate Vice-President for Research on behalf of the Research Committee.

10. Mary Immaculate Research Repository & Digital Archive (MIRR)

MIRR is a RIAN-compliant open-access repository developed to support dissemination of research generated by MIC staff, postgraduates and research groups. Through this policy MIC endorses MIRR and encourages staff and postgraduate students to avail of the advantages it offers. The potential of MIRR in terms of new opportunities for collaborations and publicity is substantial. MIRR is both an Institutional Repository and a Digital Archive. MIRR is underpinned by the principles of the "Open Archive Initiative" and is compliant with the Higher Education Authority (HEA) *Policy relating to the open access repository of published research* (2008).

11. Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee (MIREC)

The Mary Immaculate College Research Ethics Committee (MIREC) has overall responsibility for research ethics in all aspects of research involving human participants where this research is conducted by MIC staff, postgraduates and undergraduates. MIREC supports all researchers in ensuring that research is carried out to the highest possible standards with regard for the welfare of

human participants and in accordance with recognised legal, professional and ethical standards. Through this policy the College endorses MIREC and requires MIC staff, postgraduates and undergraduates apply to MIREC (including as appropriate its devolved ethics committees / boards at departmental / faculty level) for ethical clearance for research projects involving human participants.

12. Research Institutes & Centres

Designated MIC Research Institutes and Centres are formed to offer a locus and support structure for thematic research within the College. They offer an opportunity for College staff from various departments and different disciplinary backgrounds to come together in collaboration in order to conduct research in an interdisciplinary context. They also provide a structure within which MIC academics collaborate with colleagues from other institutions and organisations both nationally and internationally. They provide enhanced potential for researchers to develop and expand the range and depth of their collective research plans, and to respond to opportunities requiring economies of scale as they arise. In some cases this confers improved access to funding and other resources, while in others it opens up opportunities to engage in large-scale projects that are beyond the capacity of individuals operating on their own.

13. Research Reporting Mechanisms

The Associate Vice-President for Research will have oversight of all aspects of research undertaken in the College, including external research funding applications, pre and post-award internal and external research applications/grants, and reports to external funding agencies.

14. Annual Research Survey

All members of the academic staff are required to participate in and respond to the annual Research Survey conducted by the Research Support Office. Based on this survey and other available data, the Research Support Office will compile an annual database of research activities and research outputs.

15. Accountability

Where the College makes funds available to staff members for research, the recipients must be accountable to the College and must report progress / completion of the activities for which they are funded to the Associate Vice-President for Research.

16. Academic Freedom

In keeping with the College's Mission Statement commitment to "excellence in teaching, learning, and research" and to "the intellectual freedom of staff and students", it is agreed that academic staff are free to engage in research / postgraduate work within their area of professional expertise. The freedom of academic staff to engage in and disseminate relevant research is also recognised.

17. Implementation

The operation of this policy and the research support schemes described here will be overseen by the Associate Vice-President for Research on behalf of the College Management. Detailed information on the schemes, application processes and records relating implementation of the schemes will be provided by the Research Support Office. The Research Committee will advise and assist the Associate Vice-President for Research and the Research Support Office in these functions.

18. Review

This policy will be reviewed within five years of its adoption by ABR, or sooner if required.