Support Account Procedure

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This Procedure sets out the requirements for the governance and use of funds in Staff Support Accounts, College Support Accounts, School Support Accounts and Institute Support Accounts ('support accounts').

Section 2 - Scope

(2) This Procedure applies to all support accounts.

Section 3 - Audience

(3) This document should be read and understood by:

a. staff who hold Staff Support Accounts;
b. Institute, School and College staff who use and distribute funds held in Institute, School or College Support Accounts;
c. Financial Services, and Research and Innovation Division staff;
d. Delegates authorised to approve expenditure that is subject to this Procedure.

Section 4 - Definitions

(4) In the context of this document the following definitions apply:

Defined Term	Meaning
Chief Investigator	A person responsible for the conduct of research project(s) and named as a Chief Investigator on a grant (G Number) or cost collector.
College Support Account	A Support Account assigned to the College.
School Support Account	A Support Account assigned to the School.
Institute Support Account	A Support Account assigned to the Institute.
Staff Support Account	A separate cost collector established for the deposit of surplus funds received by the University: - under the Project and Consultancy Procedure; - from grants (G Number) in accordance with this Procedure; or - from the distribution of recovered indirect costs.
Stipend	An amount provided for a Higher Degree by Research (HDR) candidate to use towards living and study-related expenses.

Section 5 - Procedure

(5) Only funds which may be used at the discretion of the University may be transferred to a support account. Funds that are subject to a funding agreement or other restrictions must remain in their original grant (G Number) or cost collector until all obligations are satisfied.

(6) At the time they are identified, funds may alternatively be transferred to the cost collector of a Centre or Institute as defined in the Framework to define College Units, Research Centres, Academies and Institutes rather than being put into a support account. This decision cannot be reversed once funds are transferred.

(7) Recovered indirect costs that are to be distributed to a University of Newcastle Chief Investigator or College will be transferred to a Staff Support Account, College Support Account, or Institute Support Account.

Part A - Staff Support Accounts

(8) The purpose of a Staff Support Account is to provide a pool of funds from which a staff member can provide greater direction as to the application of those monies. Funds in a Staff Support Account must be applied for purposes aligned with the University strategic intent i.e. to support research and education activities. Managers and supervisors are to be consulted in the appropriate use of Staff Support Accounts.

(9) Funds held in Staff Support Accounts will be transferred to University general reserves at the time a staff member leaves the employment of the University and/or ceases an honorary appointment with the University and are not transferable or payable to the individual, another Staff Support Account, or another institution.

(10) The end date of Staff Support Accounts is set by the Chief Financial Officer.

Use of Funds in a Staff Support Account

(11) Expenditure of funds from Staff Support Accounts are subject to the University's Delegation of Authority Framework and Schedules (see Delegations Register) and any relevant University policies or procedures.

(12) Allowed activities for uses of funds in Staff Support Accounts are:

a. bridging funds for academically related activities between funding contracts;
b. support for professional development;
c. seed funding for new initiatives;
d. support for candidates under HDR supervision;
e. funds to support research, including but not limited to publishing or other administrative costs associated with research activity;
f. intellectual property protection costs, such as patent costs, approved by Knowledge Exchange & Enterprise (KEE);
g. purchases of minor equipment or consumables; or
h. travel and attendance at relevant conferences or other industry or discipline related engagement events.

(13) Staff Support Account funds cannot be used for:

a. any activity that would create a potential, perceived or actual conflict of interest including payment of a salary or stipend for a spouse or dependent;
b. private expenditure including payments for spouse or dependent travel;
c. transfer of funds to another institution;

d. any expense that creates a commitment beyond the end date of the Staff Support Account or is greater than the balance of the Staff Support Account at the time the commitment is made. For example, but not limited to:
    i. purchase of capital;
    ii. employment of continuing staff;
    iii. multi-year service contracts;
    iv. HDR stipends except where the commitment is guaranteed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) or the College Pro Vice-Chancellor from operating or other funds under their administration.

(14) Expenses charged to the Staff Support Account may not be subsequently reallocated to another grant (G Number), Staff Support Account or cost collector.

(15) Staff with funds in a Staff Support Account should utilise these funds for allowed activities, prior to accessing any other fund sources such as operating funds or Research Support Program (RSP) distributions.

(16) Any deficit from a grant (G Number) will be charged to the Staff Support Account of the Chief Investigator. Where there are multiple Chief Investigators on the grant then the deficit may be shared across all Chief Investigator's Staff Support Accounts. This includes deficits resulting from:

a. expenditure exceeding the awarded budget;
b. expenditure on non-allowable items;
c. failure to adhere to grant conditions resulting in loss of research revenue. For example, failing to deliver research reports in accordance with the research agreement; or
d. integrity matters.

(17) Funds remaining in a Staff Support Account may be rolled forward at the end of the each year subject to confirmation that the staff member has:

a. $50,000 or less in their Staff Support Account or, if the balance is greater than $50,000 then the staff member must have an approved strategy for utilising the funds agreed with the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor;
b. no accounts in deficit or contained debts agreed greater than 90 days for which they are the Chief Investigator or responsible officer;
c. met other core teaching and research accountabilities as well as any consultancy or contract work;
d. has delivered on any existing strategies for the application of funds.

(18) Where the staff member has not met the requirements of clause 17, any remaining funds are to be transferred to the School Support Account. If the staff member is a Head of School any remaining funds will be transferred to the respective College Support Account.

(19) A report of Staff Support Account balances will be provided on a periodic basis to the Pro Vice-Chancellor of the College or Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the Division, as applicable, as part of the financial reporting pack.

Part B - College / School / Institute Support Accounts

(20) The purpose of a College / School / Institute Support Account is to provide a pool of funds from which the College, School or Institute can provide greater direction as to the application of these monies. Funds must be applied for purposes aligned with the University strategic intent i.e. to support research and education activities.

(21) The end date of College / School / Institute Support Accounts is set by the Chief Financial Officer.

Use of Funds in a College / School / Institute Support Account

(22) Expenditure of funds from College / School / Institute Support Accounts are subject to the University's Delegation of Authority Framework and Schedules (see Delegations Register), and any relevant University policies or procedures.

(23) Allowed activities for uses of funds in College / School / Institute Support Accounts are:

a. bridging funds for academically related activities between funding contracts;
b. support for professional development;
c. employment of fixed-term staff;
d. seed funding for new initiatives;
e. support for candidates under HDR supervision;
f. funds to support research, including but not limited to publishing or other administrative costs associated with research activity;
g. purchases of minor equipment or consumables; or
h. travel and attendance at relevant conferences or other industry or discipline related engagement events.

(24) College / School Support Account funds cannot be used for:

a. any activity that would create a potential, perceived or actual conflict of interest;
b. private expenditure including payments for spouse or dependent travel;
c. transfer of funds to another institution;
d. any expense that creates a commitment beyond the end date of the College / School / Institute Support Account or is greater than the balance of the College / School / Institute Support Account at the time the commitment is made. For example, but not limited to:
    i. purchase of capital;
    ii. employment of continuing staff;
    iii. multi-year service contracts;
    iv. HDR stipends except where the commitment is guaranteed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) or the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor from operating or other funds under their administration.

(25) Any deficit from a grant (G number) may be charged to the College / School / Institute Support Account of the Chief Investigator.

(26) Residual funds in an Institute, School or College Support Account may be rolled forward at the end of each year subject to a plan for application of these funds being approved by the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer.

(27) A report of College / School / Institute Support Account balances will be provided on a periodic basis to the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the Division, as applicable, as part of the financial reporting pack.

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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Candidate" - With regard to Higher Degree by Research it has the same meaning as student. For all other instances it is a person considered for appointment to a position.

"Research" - As defined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, or any replacing Code or document.

"School" - An organisational unit forming part of a College or Division, responsible for offering a particular course.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

"College" - An organisational unit established within the University by the Council.

"Delegate" - (noun) refers to a person occupying a position that has been granted or sub-delegated a delegation of authority, or a committee or body that has been granted or sub-delegated a delegation of authority.