

QUEX Institute Strategic Grant Scheme

2022-2023 guidelines for applicants



Background

The University of Queensland and the University of Exeter believe that the most complex global challenges — ranging from food and water security to political instability, healthy living, and digital worlds — require interdisciplinary research that spans institutions, countries and continents. To achieve true impact, the two universities have joined to create the QUEX Institute, through which our talented academic staff can work together, ensuring their distinct perspectives and expertise can bear global challenges.

In support of this vision, the QUEX Institute is launching a new flagship Strategic Grant Scheme to provide a higher level of support for one area of shared world-leading excellence and strategic alignment and collaboration to promote a deepening partnership.

The inaugural 2022-23 round of the Strategic Grant Scheme is now open, applications close **21 February 2023**.

Objectives

Following on from the ongoing QUEX Workshop and Accelerator Grant Schemes, the Strategic Grant Scheme is intended to support teams that can demonstrate world-leading research at both institutions, strong strategic alignment and clear plans to attract and leverage external funding to achieve long-term collaborative research goals.

The key aims include:

- To facilitate further development of novel research and/or teaching and learning concepts to the point of submission of bid(s) for substantial external funding.
- To facilitate the development or strengthening of industry partnerships.
- To facilitate the project team to develop intellectual property, publish research, influence national/international policy and/or achieve impact in other ways.
- To support the Institute's academic training objectives, a postdoctoral position should be built into proposed project teams, to be funded through the Strategic Grant award.

Applications must be strategically aligned and demonstrate excellence in one or more of the three QUEX themes:

- Healthy Living
- Global Environment Futures
- Digital Worlds and Disruptive Technologies

Further details regarding these themes can be found at www.exeter.ac.uk/quex/themes and www.global-partnerships.uq.edu.au/quex

Funding details

We invite applications for a total of up to £200,000 (A\$360,000) for projects of two years in length.

Funding will be staged. The successful project team will be required to submit a report after the first six months whereby progress and funding beyond this phase will depend on whether agreed milestones have been met, as assessed by the QUEX Strategy Board. QUEX reserves the right to remove or limit further funding if projects have not made the expected progress without justification.

It is expected that proposals will have matched funding. Proposals providing evidence of confirmed fully matched funding (i.e. 50% of the total cost of the project) will be prioritised. Matched funding may come from schools, faculties and/or external parties and should be at least

half cash contribution (i.e. up to 25 per cent of the total proposal). Up to half (i.e. 25% of the total project) of the matched funding may be in-kind support (see pages 2-3 for more details). The matched funding is additional to the £200,000 (A\$360,000) that can be requested from QUEX.

Funding will be provided to the nominated lead applicant, who will be responsible for reporting at the agreed stages.

Eligibility criteria

Strategic Grants will be available to the academic community at The University of Queensland and the University of Exeter. Project teams must demonstrate alignment with one or more of the three QUEX themes listed previously.

Applicants should have complementary expertise and capability, and will have already established a working relationship and track record. This must be demonstrated as part of the application. Applicants must also demonstrate an outstanding academic track record.

Previous QUEX Grant recipients are welcome to apply, however, this is not a requirement. Applicants who have previously received a QUEX Grant should describe in the application form how the new project would build on the work and achievements of the project(s) already funded.

Eligible costs are the direct costs of the project and include:

- Travel and subsistence
- Events and meetings
- Consumables
- Postdoctoral salaries
- Costs of non-academic (research or technical) staff (referred to as 'directly incurred staff costs' in the UK). Where funding is requested for research or technical posts that are also partially funded by another grant/source of funding, please check the terms and conditions of any pre-existing contract to ensure no conflicts of interest.
- Small items of equipment (up to £20,000 or A\$36,000).
- Costs must be justified in line with project deliverables and must be approved by the relevant Head of Faculty at both institutions.

Costs that are not eligible include:

- Academic salaries (with the exception of postdoctoral fellow salaries).
- Third-party travel costs
- Publication costs
- Overheads including estates and indirect costs
- Studentship/tuition fees
- Costs associated with internal research facilities

For more details on the QUEX Institute, please visit:

global-partnerships.uq.edu.au/quex or
exeter.ac.uk/quex

Application process

Applicants must discuss their application with the appropriate QUEX Institute Theme Lead(s) in advance of submission (for details of Theme Leads and general UQ and Exeter QUEX contacts see pages 4 and 6).

Applicants must complete the Strategic Grant Application Form in conjunction with their counterpart(s) at the partner institution. One overall lead applicant must be nominated for each application, to whom the Strategic Grant Funds will be transferred if successful.

Applicants should ensure that activities are planned and scheduled to ensure in the event of an award, activities can be undertaken according to the timeline.

Applications must be costed fully and approved according to each institution's internal processes before submission.

Identical copies of the application should be submitted to both institutions at the below email addresses by **21 February 2023**.

Exeter: QUEX@exeter.ac.uk

UQ: globalstrategy@uq.edu.au

All applications will be jointly assessed and shortlisted by each University's Stage One Review Panel. Shortlists will be submitted to the QUEX Institute Strategy Board for final funding decisions. Lead applicants will be notified within the specified timeframe (see key dates).

Assessment criteria

Applications will be assessed via a competitive selection process using the following criteria:

The team:

- Evidence of existing collaboration, which will be strengthened and/or expanded through this project.
- Clear evidence that the collaborative team at both institutions is carrying out world-leading research (and teaching if relevant) in the area of the proposal, with complementary strengths.
- Clear plans for how the team and its work will continue to develop beyond the project.
- Includes at least one postdoctoral candidate.

The project:

- Represents work with clear potential to be world-leading.
- Strategic fit to one or more of the QUEX theme(s).
- Alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- Clear explanation of the added value of carrying out this project through QUEX (how the proposed QUEX Strategic Grant collaboration is considered to be the most efficient path for achieving these outputs).
- Evidence that the project will contribute to meeting the following outcomes/objectives:
 - A clear plan for sustainability and future funding must be defined. Strategic grants are expected to lead to applications for substantial external funding.
 - Potential for generating non-academic benefits and impact.

- Contribution to advancing and sustaining the QUEX Institute.
- Growing QUEX collaboration in an area of strategic importance and mutual excellence.
- Represents good value for money, demonstrating feasibility and appropriateness of resources requested to deliver the outputs.
- Confirmation and details of 50% matched funding contribution.
- Plans for industry engagement, generation of IP, publication of research, to influence national/international policy and/or achieve other types of impact.
- Clear timeline and specific activities. Projects to be completed within the proposed timeline, with start-up phase activities to be completed within the first six months of the project.

Please refer to the Appendix B for further information regarding the assessment criteria.

Key dates

Date	Activity
7 Dec 2022	Calls for applications issued
21 Feb 2023	Application deadline
Mar 2023	Applicants notified of outcome
April - July 2023	Project starts
Sept - Dec 2023	Start-up phase report submission deadline (six months after start date)
April - July 2024	First year report submission deadline (one year after start date)
April - July 2025	Project completion deadline (two years after start date)
July - Sept 2025	Report submission deadline (three months after end date)

Grant acquittal and reporting

Awardees must agree to comply with all terms and conditions related to the receipt of funding, including deadlines and procedures for the acquittal of funds and reporting on outcomes.

Awardees will have a maximum of 24 months after the award date to utilise the funds. Funds that are not utilised within the specified period will have to be returned.

The project lead is responsible for submitting three reports outlining the successes and outcomes of the project:

1. Start-up phase report: reporting the first six months of project activities. Progress beyond this phase will depend on whether agreed milestones have been met, as assessed by the QUEX Strategy Board.
2. First-year progress report: summarising the activities and outcomes of the project in the first 12 months.

3. Final report: presenting all key activities including actual and potential outputs, and outcomes of the project.

These reports will be used by the QUEX Institute for the follow-up of potential opportunities and reporting on outcomes. They will potentially be highlighted on the QUEX Institute, The University of Queensland and the University of Exeter websites.

The Strategic Grant will represent a flagship QUEX initiative, and as such, grant recipients should be prepared to engage with events and publicity for the QUEX Institute.

If a funded project includes international travel, grant recipients must abide by the official reporting, insurance and registration requirements as outlined in Exeter and UQ policies.

Exeter: <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/finance/buying/travel/>

UQ: <http://ppl.app.uq.edu.au/content/1.90.01-university-travel-management>

Feedback and resubmissions

Resubmission will be by invitation only. Please refer to Appendix A for Pitfalls and Top Tips to assist with preparing your submission.

Contacts

Please contact your home institution contact if you would like any additional information.

The University of Exeter

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Appendix A. Pitfalls and top tips

1. **Added value: failing to articulate, and therefore persuade the panel, of the added value of your partnership.**

Ask your team – *what can be achieved as a QUEX Institute collaboration that could not be achieved as a single institution?* Your answer needs to be strongly and clearly articulated in the application, and evidenced where appropriate.

2. **Step-change: failing to envisage and articulate the potential step-change that can be achieved through your project.**

This connects to ‘#1 Added value’ – linking the added value of your partnership to the step-change made possible by the unique resources available through the QUEX Institute *i.e., what will you do differently: academics, infrastructure, training, external partners etc?*

3. **Leveraging external funding and other tangible outcomes: panel members need to be persuaded of the application’s value for money. They are looking for clear anticipated outcomes and realistic, cost-effective plans and leadership to achieve them.**

Articulate specific details of any potential external funding sources that can be leveraged (amounts, submission deadlines). Provide the same level of detail for other anticipated outcomes *i.e.*, publications, industry links, staff development etc. Provide details about managing the project itself, how you will achieve the project goals in the time and with the funding available.

4. **Sustainability: applications fail to articulate how the momentum and successes achieved will be sustained in the longer term.**

Outline a clear sustainability plan. Consider and articulate issues such as ongoing partnership meetings/communications, future links with industry or other external partners, leveraging further funding, expanding the network, raising the profile and influence of the group both internally and externally.

Appendix B: Detailed assessment criteria for Strategic Grant Scheme

This guidance has provided to assist applicants when completing their Strategic Grant Scheme application forms. The purpose is to explain what type of information and evidence is required to satisfy the assessment criteria.

Assessment criteria	Application form [section]	Evidence required
The Team		
Previous collaboration	6a	Clear evidence of existing collaboration and how it will be strengthened and/or expanded through this project.
Quality of team	6a	Clear evidence that the team at both institutions is carrying out world-leading research (and teaching if relevant) in the areas of the proposal and that the team has complementary strengths.
Building capacity	6a, 6f, 7	Evidence for the potential of the relationship and how the team and its work will continue to develop beyond the project. What mechanisms will be used to ensure ongoing interaction? A clear sense of potential trajectory for the project and the relationship.
Project management	6a, 6e	Evidence that the team has the capabilities to successfully manage the project, providing reassurance that, if funded, the project will run on time, to budget and deliver against its aims, activities and target outcomes.
Postdoctoral researcher	8a	At least one postdoctoral candidate is included in the project team.
The Project		
Quality of the proposed work	5, 6d, 6f	Evidence that the work proposed in the project has clear potential to be world-leading, with the potential to publish high-quality papers, influence policy, and leverage external funding.
Strategic fit	3a, 3b, 6b, 7	Evidence that this is a unique research opportunity that is in line with the QUEx Institute's purpose.
Clear information on how the proposed project would enhance the development of one of the established themes and, if applicable, subthemes.	6, 7	Communicates how the project relationship would contribute to sustaining and strengthening the QUEx Institute.
Alignment with the the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals	3b	Evidence that the project aligns with one or more of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to provide a blueprint for achieving a better and more sustainable future for all. State which goal(s) the project will address and how.
Added value of QUEx	3a, 7	Clear identification of the need for, and value of, carrying out the proposed work through the QUEx Institute, with supporting details on how the project would be significantly enhanced as a result of it being undertaken through the QUEx Institute rather than by an individual academic or institution. Clear explanation of why a QUEx strategic Grant is the most suitable way to support this work
Project plan	5, 6e, 8b	Evidence that the project has been thoroughly considered and planned, with stretching but achievable goals.
Follow-on funding	6f	A clear and specific plan is included for applications for substantial external funding.
Anticipated outcomes and benefits	6f, 7b	Details of specific and tangible outcomes and benefits (including for UQ and UoE) anticipated as a direct result of this project, with a timeline and assessment of the likelihood and significance of these.
Advancing and sustaining the QUEx Institute	7	Consideration of how the project collaboration would contribute to sustaining and strengthening the QUEx Institute.
Leveraging funding	6f, 8	Clear details of how the project aims to leverage external funding as a direct result of this award (including the matched funding).

Theme leaders

Applicants are encouraged to contact the relevant QUEX Theme Lead at their home institution to discuss their submission and its alignment with the theme.

Exeter	UQ
Healthy Living	
Professor Rob Anderson Professor of Health Services and Implementation Research, Director of Research Impact (Institute of Health Research) E: r.anderson@exeter.ac.uk	Professor John Cairney Head of School, School of Human Movement and Nutrition Sciences, Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences E: j.cairney@uq.edu.au
Global Environmental Futures	
Professor Catriona McKinnon Professor of Political Theory, Department of Politics E: c.mckinnon@exeter.ac.uk	Professor Peter Mumby VC Research and Teaching Fellowship, School of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Science E: p.j.mumby@uq.edu.au Dr Sarit Kaserzon Senior Research Fellow, Queensland Alliance for Environmental Health Sciences, Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences E: k.sarit@uq.edu.au
Digital Worlds and Disruptive Technologies	
Dr James Muldoon Senior Lecturer, Department of Politics E: j.muldoon@exeter.ac.uk	Associate Professor Stephen Viller Associate Professor, School of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Information Technology E: viller@itee.uq.edu.au