

2026 Program Guidelines



**Career
Reignite**

Table of Contents

Overview – Career Reignite Program.....	3
Career Reignite Professional Coaching Services	3
Career Reignite Funding Scheme	3
Key dates for 2026.....	4
Career Reignite Coaching Services	4
Eligibility.....	4
Expression of Interest Process	5
Selection Process	5
Expectations of Approved Career Reignite Coaching Participants	5
Expectations of line managers of Career Reignite Coaching Participants	6
Career Reignite Funding Scheme	6
Career Reignite Funding Purpose	6
Eligibility.....	7
Eligible Career Interruption	7
Eligible Applicant.....	7
Funding.....	7
Application Process	8
Selection Process	9
Career Reignite Program Guiding Principles	9
Health, Safety, and Wellbeing.....	9
Enquiries and further information.....	10

Overview – Career Reignite Program

The Career Reignite Program has been established to enable RMIT to better support our research academic staff who experience career interruption or barriers which impact on their ability to access research opportunities. The Program is also designed to complement enterprise-wide initiatives that champion long-term cultural change as well as other initiatives supporting career progression, such as [RMIT's Athena SWAN](#) Action Plan and [Cygnet Award](#) submissions. The Career Reignite Program is designed to:

- Improve access and awareness relating to entitlements and options for staff planning for / experiencing a career pause, their line managers, and the research community more generally.
- Provide access to a Coaching Panel to develop individual Research Career Action and Transition plans.
- Identify services / support required for individuals through Research Career Action / Transition Plans.
- Provide interventions that are bespoke and flexible to address the needs of the individual (merit-based support).
- Provide a tiered approach to support (different activities supported based on individual milestones and selection criteria).
- Provide administrative case management.

The program encompasses two schemes, individuals can apply for both schemes, noting limits apply for those previously supported through the Program:

Career Reignite Professional Coaching Services

This service provides eligible research academic staff with three individual coaching sessions by accredited external coaches, addressing career interruptions or barriers hindering their research opportunities. Participants use these sessions to set goals, create individual research career action plans, and discuss areas like leadership development and work / life balance. The Coaching Panel employs effective tools to maximise benefits, ensure completion of plans, and highlight available resources. Active involvement of line managers in the goal-setting and handover stages is required to successfully develop achievable development plans.

Career Reignite Funding Scheme

Career Reignite Funding aims to support academic staff with documented evidence of significant research achievements and potential, who have faced career interruptions or barriers impacting their access to research opportunities. For the 2026 calendar year, the Career Reignite Funding Scheme is available in the range of \$5,000 to \$20,000.

Additional support - STEM College partners with the Research & Innovation Portfolio to contribute additional support towards the Career Reignite Program.

Applicants from the STEM College will also be considered for College-based funding support, if available.

Key dates for 2026

Friday 21 November 2025, 11am	Online information session
Friday 21 November 2025	Round Opens
Friday 6 March 2026, 1pm (AEDST)	Round and applications close
Mid-March through Mid-April 2026	Assessment period
Late-April 2026	Notification of Outcomes

Career Reignite Coaching Services

Eligibility

This coaching service is available to those who meet all the criteria below:

- Current RMIT academic staff members, all academic levels (inclusive of RMIT Vietnam and RMIT Europe) with a Research Only or Teaching & Research role in a continuing or fixed-term position which expires no earlier than 31 December 2026 OR in a role that conducts research and is within one of RMIT's higher education [Academic Colleges](#)
- Full or part-time (minimum appointment at 0.4FTE fraction).
- Support from line manager to participate in the coaching program.
- Has not previously participated in the Career Reignite Coaching Program.

NOTE: Casual employees are not eligible to apply.

Applicants must have experienced a career interruption that has impacted their research activity within the last 3 years, examples of career interruptions include the following, noting this is not an exclusive list:

- Parental leave.
- Gradual return from parental leave.
- Caring for children.
- Caring for elderly relatives.
- Other personal circumstances that impact on the time that can be allocated to research.
- Change to research component of employment (e.g., periods of intensive teaching, transitioning to or from industry placement, secondment from research duties, program coordination which limits research publication).

The career interruption must be for a period of more than three months and / or a long-term partial return to work.

Expression of Interest Process

Those interested in accessing Career Reignite Coaching sessions must complete the online [SmartyGrants form](#).

The form asks applicants to:

- Provide details of their employment at RMIT University.
- Provide details of any career interruptions or disruptions.
- Describe the anticipated outcomes of the coaching exercise, detailing how they anticipate the coaching sessions to positively impact the trajectory of their research and career progression.
- Confirm line-manager has been advised of the EOI, has provided in-principle support to participate, and will commit to the role and time commitment outlined in the 'Expectations of line managers of Career Reignite Coaching Participants' section.

Selection Process

In circumstances where demand from eligible staff for coaching sessions exceeds places available, a ranking process may be required. The Chair of the Career Reignite Selection Panel (Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Innovation Capability) in consultation with relevant research leaders from Schools / Colleges, may seek advice on ranking applications, particularly where multiple EOIs are submitted from within the same school. Ranking will consider such things as:

- The demonstrated nature and extent of the career interruption, and the impact of the interruption on the applicant's career.
- Potential for the coaching service to positively impact momentum (or trajectory / direction) of research and career progression.
- Demonstrated behaviour aligned to the [RMIT values](#).

Expectations of Approved Career Reignite Coaching Participants

The Career Reignite Coaching sessions are distinct from mentoring sessions, with the agenda to be set by the individual coachee, focussing on career development. Any confidential matters that arise during the coaching sessions remain confidential. At the conclusion of the coaching sessions, participants are to produce an Action Plan designed to be shared with their line manager at handover stage, or other appropriate RMIT staff, to enable the plan to be successfully put into action and to ensure appropriate sources of support can be triaged based on need.

Approved participants will complete evaluation and feedback on the coaching sessions and the program, and commit to ongoing self-assessment for their own development. Self-assessments will remain private to the coachee. Line managers will have sight only of the agreed Career Transition Plan to support implementation. Participants may also receive occasional requests from the coordinating team for

Program Impact Stories that will allow us to profile how the Career Reignite support has facilitated positive and rewarding experiences.

Expectations of line managers of Career Reignite Coaching Participants

For the coaching support to successfully develop achievable development plans for the coachee, the active involvement of line managers in the goal-setting and handover stages is very important.

A summary of line manager's role and commitment to the coaching program is detailed below:

- Play an active role in i) understanding the coachee's career development needs and ii) creating a supportive environment to achieve career goals
- Participate in a line-manager briefing session, a meeting with coachee and the coach, at the beginning and end of the coaching sessions. It is estimated to total 3 hours of your time over the program duration.
- Support coachee in implementing relevant career development actions arising from coaching action plans (including workplan discussions)
- Participate in program review and evaluation

Career Reignite Funding Scheme

Career Reignite Funding Purpose

Career Reignite Funding supports academic staff with recognised evidence of high research achievement and promise, who have experienced career interruption or barriers that have impacted on their ability to access research opportunities.

The objectives of the scheme are to positively transform the momentum (or trajectory / direction) of research and career progression for those have demonstrated the most need, after a career interruption that has severely affected their research trajectory.

The Selection Panel will prioritise allocation of funding to those applications where it is considered the impact of the funding will be maximised and multiple benefits will be attained using the funding to reignite research careers.

Those applicants seeking standard research grants or seed funding should apply through the standard channels, including other [internal RMIT funding opportunities](#), such as [Enabling Impact Platform funding](#), or [external funding opportunities](#).

The funding is provided at a crucial time in the careers of high potential academic staff to help reduce the impact of career breaks on research productivity and career progression.

Eligibility

Eligible Career Interruption

Applicants must clearly demonstrate a significant career disruption / interruption that has impacted productivity, research outcomes and / or competitiveness in the field and / or research career trajectory.

The career interruption must have occurred within the last 3 years. Examples of career interruptions include the following, noting this is not an exclusive list:

- Parental leave.
- Graduated return from parental leave.
- Caring for children.
- Caring for elderly relatives.
- Other personal circumstances that impact on the time that can be allocated to research.
- Change to research component of employment (e.g. periods of intensive teaching, transitioning to or from industry placement, secondment from research duties, program coordination which limits research publication).

The career interruption must be for a period of more than three months and / or a long-term partial return to work.

Eligible Applicant

To be eligible, applicants must be a current RMIT University academic staff member (inclusive of RMIT Vietnam and RMIT Europe) and fulfil the following criteria:

- Current RMIT academic staff member, at all academic levels, with a Research Only or Teaching & Research role in a continuing or fixed-term position which expires no earlier than 31 December 2026 OR in a role that conducts research and is within one of RMIT's higher education [Academic Colleges](#)
Casual employees are ineligible.
- Have experienced a career disruption that meets the 'Eligible Career Interruption' guidelines.
- Possess a Ph.D. or equivalent experience in their respective field.
- Full or part-time (minimum appointment at 0.4FTE fraction).
- Demonstrated evidence of significant research achievements and potential.
- Maintain a minimum 30% research allocation.
- Preference will be given to applicants who have not previously received Career Reignite Funding.

Funding

Career Reignite Funding can be used to fund expenses related to:

- Personnel (research assistance; relief from other duties such as teaching and large unit / course coordination). Note: Those seeking funds for teaching or

administrative relief must consult with their School to confirm this is allowed and the preferred mode of teaching relief.

- Pilot studies.
- Research translation.
- Research collaboration.
- Carer's support (including carer support whilst travelling to conduct research or present a paper at a conference).
- Professional development (where appropriate).
- Travel (where appropriate, – for activity that clearly provides direct benefit to the project).
- Other direct research resources where funding is not available (e.g., publishing in open access journal publications).

For the 2026 calendar year, the Career Reignite Funding Scheme is available in the range of \$5,000 to \$20,000. Recipients must utilise the funding by November 30, 2026.

Any proposed changes to fund usage requires approval, and the Selection Panel reserves the right to withdraw funding for unapproved requests.

Application Process

Applicants for the Career Reignite Funding Scheme must complete an online [SmartyGrants form](#).

The form asks applicants to:

- Provide details of their employment at RMIT University.
- Provide a succinct summary of their research success and impact.
- Provide details of any career interruptions or disruptions.
- For those who participated in the Career Reignite Coaching service, a description of the outcomes of the coaching exercise.
- Provide details of current funding available from both internal and external sources.
- Explain how they intend to use the Career Reignite funding and how this will positively impact the trajectory of their research and career progression.
- Provide a brief budget that links proposed items / activities to anticipated outcomes and timelines.
- Endorsement of the application from Dean / Head of School or equivalent.
- Upload a current Curriculum Vitae. The CV should highlight your most significant achievements / outputs of the previous 5 years.
- Include a statement from ONE referee in support of your application (max 1 A4 page – copy of email support is acceptable). This statement should refer to the selection criteria and comment on research performance relative to opportunity. Referees can either be an RMIT academic or external person familiar with the applicant's research, achievements, and career interruption(s).

Selection Process

All eligible applications will be assessed by the Career Reignite Funding Selection Panel (Panel).

The Panel will assess applications against the key selection criteria (not in order of priority):

- The demonstrated nature and extent of the career interruption, and the impact of the interruption on the applicant's career. Applications that demonstrate the potential for significant impact to career progression will be prioritised. **NOTE: where the evidence shows the career interruption(s) have had minimal or no impact on research career / outputs these applications may receive a lower priority for funding.**
- Potential for the funding to positively impact momentum (or trajectory / direction) of research and career progression. **NOTE: preference will be given to applicants where evidence shows the funding will make a transformative change to research trajectory i.e. those with a higher level of need will be prioritised.**
- Track record will be assessed relative to opportunity. The Panel will prioritise proposals where the funding is likely to have a transformative effect on momentum and outcomes.
- Feasibility of the proposed budget and that no other source of funding is available. Preference will be given to those applicants who do not have access to other funding sources.

The Panel may, on a confidential basis, consult with the relevant Deans or Associate Deans regarding individual applications. Panel members must declare conflicts of interest. Where a conflict exists, the member will recuse themselves from discussion / decision on the application.

Career Reignite Program Guiding Principles

- Fair, transparent, and non-judgemental.
- Outcome productivity and merit based.
- Gender inclusive.
- Staff at all academic levels who have a fixed term or continuing teaching and research or research only position.
- Review performance relative to opportunity and potential.
- Recognition that career interruptions are not static or linear.
- Key to talent attraction and retention.
- Considers needs across all colleges and disciplines.

Health, Safety, and Wellbeing

- RMIT provides support for staff wellbeing through various channels. General Health, Safety and Wellbeing information is [available here](#). Specific links below for:
- [Employee Assistance Program](#)

- [Mental Wellbeing support Services](#)
- [Safer Community team](#)

Enquiries and further information

Please direct all enquiries, including queries regarding the application and selection process, to [**researchcareerinterruption@rmit.edu.au**](mailto:researchcareerinterruption@rmit.edu.au). For up-to-date information on the current round please visit <https://www.rmit.edu.au/staff/research/career-reignite-program>.