

ACADEMIC RESEARCH FUND (ARF) GUIDELINES

Athabasca University is committed to fostering a robust and supportive culture that will effectively balance disciplinary and mission critical research. While these two fields of endeavor may overlap, the latter tends to focus on inquiry into pedagogical, cognitive, technical, and student support aspects of distance learning, open access, learning technologies, and digital media studies. Interdisciplinary approaches and partnerships within and outside the academy are encouraged to enlarge research contexts and paradigms and to generate new ways of thinking.

The Academic Research Fund supports the attainment of these goals by providing funds to support such research endeavours, foster success in the pursuit of external research funding and facilitate research that falls outside the normal eligibility criteria of external funding agencies.

The Academic Research Fund is funded primarily by Athabasca University. Additional funds are derived from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Small Institution Grant (SIG), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) General Research Fund. Together, these funds comprise the annual Academic Research Fund budget and are administered by the Academic Research Committee.

Applicants who receive funding from the Academic Research Fund should acknowledge the funding in related publications and presentations.

RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS / ANIMALS / BIOHAZARDS / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- Research involving humans normally requires written approval of the Athabasca University (AU) Research Ethics Board (REB) prior to commencement, irrespective of the source of funding (if any) and the location of the research, if the research is being conducted by a member of the AU community or under the auspices of AU.
- The [AU Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans Policy](#) and related Procedures provide additional information in this regard. REB applications must be submitted via the Athabasca University [Research Portal](#).
- Researchers may seek AU Research Ethics Board approval either prior to or following the submission of an application to the Academic Research Fund.
- Researchers who are not certain about whether or not their research requires AU Research Ethics Board approval should consult the AU Research Ethics Office by e-mail at rebsec@athabascau.ca or by telephone at (780) 675-6718.
- Additional non-AU Research Ethics Board and/or institutional access approvals may also be required to access the participants and/or data required to conduct your study. Researchers are advised to contact the appropriate individual(s) in the site(s) in which the research will be conducted to determine what actions (if any) are required prior to the commencement of their research.
- Researchers who plan to conduct a study that involves human or animal pathogens, toxins or potential environmental impact should be aware of specific protocols that exist and/or other approvals that may need to be obtained prior to commencing the proposed research. Researchers are advised to contact the AU Biosafety Officer at sciencelab@athabascau.ca to discuss whether the safety procedures identified are appropriate to the work proposed.
- Researchers who are not certain about whether or not their research requires AU Research Ethics Board approval should consult the AU Research Ethics Office by email at rebsec@athabascau.ca or by telephone at (780) 675-6718.
- Funds from the Academic Research Fund will not be released until all relevant ethics certifications have been approved.

APPLICATION DEADLINES & NOTIFICATION

Academic Research Fund (ARF) Normally twice per year	February 15 th & September 10 th <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If these dates fall on a weekend or statutory holiday, the deadline shall be the next business day. ▪ Award notification normally occurs within 21 business days of application deadline.
Academic Research Fund (ARF) Publications Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applications may be submitted at any time and will be subject to an expedited review. ▪ Award notification normally occurs within 14 business days of submission of application. ▪ If the application is denied, the publication expenses shall be the responsibility of the applicant.

<p>Juried/Solicited Creative Works Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applications may be submitted at any time and will be subject to an expedited review. ▪ Award notification normally occurs within 14 business days of submission of application.
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<p>**EXCEPTIONAL REVIEW</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Applicants requesting review of an Academic Research Fund application at times other than the stated deadlines must submit 1) a one-page (maximum) description of the extenuating circumstances underlying the request to the Chair of the Academic Research Committee and 2) a fully complete application via the Athabasca University Research Portal. 2) The Academic Research Committee has the right to accept or deny any request for an Exceptional Review. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If denied, the applicant may re-submit the application in accordance with the normal deadlines. ▪ If accepted, the committee will conduct an asynchronous review of the application within 10 business days of initial receipt. 	

<p>ELIGIBILITY</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Full-time, part-time and term Athabasca University Faculty Association (AUFA) members are eligible to apply as Principal Investigator(s) (PI) or Co-Investigator(s) (Co-I). 2) Term AUFA members must complete the proposed research prior to the end of their term appointment. 3) Non-AUFA members may be named as Co-Investigator(s) but may not hold an Academic Research Fund award as Principal Investigator. 4) Applicants may submit two applications in the same fiscal year. The first research study must be complete and all expense claims, invoices, Research Assistant timesheets and the final report must be submitted before the second application is submitted. 5) A Principal Investigator (PI) cannot hold two concurrent Academic Research Fund awards. 6) A Principal Investigator (PI) may be a Co-Investigator in another Academic Research Fund application however; the two research studies cannot be related. 	

<p>SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) All applications must be submitted through the Athabasca University Research Portal. 2) Only completed applications, including applicable appendices, will be considered for review by the Academic Research Committee. Late submissions will not be accepted. 3) Applications will be reviewed in accordance with these guidelines. 4) Award recipients are obliged to abide by the conditions governing these awards, conduct the research as proposed and adhere to all relevant Athabasca University Research Policies and related procedures in so doing. 	

<p>VALUE OF AWARD</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Normally, an Academic Research Fund research award shall not exceed \$6,000. 2) Funding awarded to an individual to support juried/solicited creative works and/or publication charges shall not exceed \$2,000 CDN per fiscal year. 3) Applicants shall acknowledge their receipt of an Academic Research Fund award in dissemination activities related to the proposed project. An exception to this is an award related to publication charges, which is not normally granted until after a manuscript has been formally accepted for publication. 4) Awards cannot be transferred to another Academic Research Fund application or to another project. 5) Unused funds shall be retained in the Academic Research Fund. 	

PURPOSE OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH FUND (ARF)

Academic Research Fund awards are intended to:

- 1) Enhance the research experience of award recipients
- 2) Foster research creativity and innovation
- 3) Support short-term research studies, including completion of a preliminary investigation or pilot study prior to the submission of an application for external funding
- 4) Provide support for data collection and analysis, including the conduct of formal systematic literature reviews
- 5) Facilitate the acquisition of research tools (e.g., small equipment, data management/analysis software, encrypted storage devices)
- 6) Complement resources available from external funding agencies, including supporting the completion of studies for which other resources have been fully expended
- 7) Provide support for research that falls outside the normal eligibility criteria of external funding agencies or merits other special consideration
- 8) Help defray the costs of (1) dissemination of research findings in a print and/or online open access peer-reviewed publication and (2) dissemination of juried/solicited creative works (e.g., exhibits, performances).

BUDGET: ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Examples of eligible expenses supported by the Academic Research Fund include, but are not necessarily limited to the following:

- 1) Travel costs directly related to conducting the research
- 2) Accommodation (normally to a maximum of 21 days)
 - All claims must be consistent with the Athabasca University [Travel and Expense Claim Policy](#)
- 3) Hiring of one or more Research Assistants
 - Funding to hire a Research Assistant(s) will be considered if the:
 - a) Principal Investigator (PI) is substantively involved in the research
 - b) Research Assistant(s) is/are a student(s) with preference given to AU students
 - c) Research Assistant role includes a strong research-related knowledge and skill development component
 - d) Contributions of the Research Assistant(s) will be appropriately acknowledged in the dissemination of the findings of the research
 - Refer to the Athabasca University [Hiring Research Assistants Policy](#) for additional information about expectations of Research Assistants and rates of pay.
 - If the Research Assistant is located outside Canada, the applicant must provide verifiable information regarding equitable pay rates in the region.
- 4) Materials and Supplies
 - Allowable expenses include, for example, postage, long distance telephone charges, data management/analysis software that is not otherwise normally available at AU, encrypted data storage and backup, paper, computer ink cartridges, photocopying, printing.
 - Microfilms/fiches or digital scans of archival materials.
- 5) Translation of research tools into another language.
- 6) Incentives for participation, as appropriate
 - Value of the incentives must be justified.
- 7) Funding from other sources
 - Funding from other internal (e.g., Research Incentive Grant; Professional Development Fund) and/or external sources that will be used in the conduct of the research study may be included in the budget to provide a more detailed account of how the research will be funded.

- 8) Involvement of other AU faculties, centres or departments
 - Identify any AU faculties, centres or departments that will be directly involved in providing equipment or services to facilitate the research.
 - State whether the costs of the equipment or services provided will be charged to the research project or donated without charge.
 - a) A realistic estimate of the monetary value of the commitment should be included in the budget to provide a more detailed account of how the research will be funded.
 - b) Written confirmation of support by the department head/manager of the appropriate faculty, centre or department must be provided
- 9) Involvement of Externally Contracted Services
 - Identify if any contracted services external to AU will be used in the research study.
 - a) Provide a rationale for the selection of the external contracted service(s)
 - b) Service(s) to be provided
 - c) Communications or circumstances leading up to the choice (if the service is normally available at AU)
 - d) Confirmation that no conflict of interest exists between members of the research team and the selected contractor(s).
 - e) Identify if there any facilities, equipment or services (external to AU) that will be used in conducting the research study.

For juried/solicited creative works, eligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Materials required to exhibit the work
- 2) Travel by the applicant to/from the venue at which the work is being exhibited or performed
- 3) Co-applicants (maximum of two) may be funded, provided that both have an active role in the dissemination activity

ACADEMIC RESEARCH FUND (ARF) DOES NOT SUPPORT

Examples of **activities not supported** by the Academic Research Fund include, but are not necessarily limited to the following:

- 1) Payment of a salary or stipend to the Principal Investigator(s) or Co-Investigator(s) or to research study team members who hold a full or part-time academic or professional (or equivalent) appointment within AU or at another institution
- 2) Conducting a preliminary literature review for a subsequent study
- 3) Research conducted to fulfill the requirements of a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree program
- 4) Travel, relocation, or other personal expenses associated with Research and Study Leave
- 5) Travel expenses, honoraria, or other gifts for visiting scholars
- 6) Dissemination activities funded by the Academic and Professional Development Fund
- 7) Professional development not directly related to the proposed research
- 8) Cost of preparing a manuscript for publication (e.g., designing; editing, indexing)
- 9) Publication costs of a book or monograph
- 10) Translation of materials into another language for the purpose of dissemination
- 11) Purchase of reprints of a published article
- 12) Purchase of books
- 13) Course development and/or revision
- 14) Course and/or program evaluation

- 15) Creation of Open Educational Resources (OER) or other learning resources/tools
- 16) Sequential or multiphase studies that comprise a long-term research program

For juried/solicited creative works, ineligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Exhibits designed to fulfill requirements of a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree program
- 2) Payments of a stipend, honoraria or other fee
- 3) Translation of the juried/solicited creative work into another language
- 4) Preparation of a manuscript based on the juried/solicited creative work

DURATION OF AWARD

- 1) All projects must be completed within one year of approval.
- 2) If, due to extenuating circumstances, the research will not be completed prior to the stated end date, the award recipient is required to notify the Chair of the Academic Research Committee by submitting an Academic Research Fund Renewal Report, at least 30 days prior to the original end date.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 1) The Academic Research Committee normally adjudicates all Academic Research Fund applications. Consultation may be sought from individuals possessing specific expertise (e.g., methodological) as required.
- 2) Applicants are encouraged to ensure that their application can be readily understood and evaluated by others who are not necessarily familiar with the technical language used in their discipline or field.
- 3) Not all of the questions on the Academic Research Fund application form may be applicable to a particular research study. In such cases, the applicant is encouraged to provide sufficient other relevant information that will allow the reviewers to assess his/her application.

Applications will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- 1) Consistency with the Guidelines for the Academic Research Fund
- 2) Clarity and completeness of the information provided
- 3) Scientific merit and/or other relevant criteria used in the related field of study
- 4) Budget, including relevance of and justification for all planned expenditures
- 5) Expertise of the research team in relation to the proposed study
- 6) Fit within the Principal Investigator's (PI's) long-term/ongoing program of research
- 7) Quality of the research training experience to be provided to student(s), Research Assistant(s) and/or others
- 8) Plans for the dissemination of the research findings

SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH STUDY

The following support is required as part of the application process:

- 1) If the Principal Investigator (PI) is an AUFA academic, support from their Dean (or delegate), is required.
 - Support from the Dean (or delegate) (1) constitutes approval of financial and/or other commitments and (2) attests that the undertaking is reasonable, given the nature and requirements of the applicant's position within the division.
- 2) If the Principal Investigator (PI) is an AUFA professional, support from his/her Department Head is required.
 - Support from the Department Head of the division in which the professional staff member works (1) constitutes approval of financial and/or other commitments, and (2) attests that the undertaking is reasonable, given the nature and requirements of the applicant's position within the division.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

A final report on the research project must be submitted via the Athabasca University [Research Portal](#) within one month following completion of the research for which funding was received. The final report must demonstrate that the research was conducted in accordance with the approved application and related budget.

- Subsequent Academic Research Fund awards will be conditional upon the submission of a final report for grants previously approved by the Academic Research Committee.