ARC Special Research Initiative for a Science of Learning Research Centre

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2014–15 Federal Budget
(Approx. AU$415 billion)
Australian Government support for science, research and innovation shown in red

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Main Issues

- **Special Research Initiatives Scheme**: The ARC *Special Research Initiatives* (SRI) Scheme was established under the *Australian Research Council Act 2001* to address specific research priorities and/or to build capacity in strategically important areas.

- **Science of Learning Research Centre**: The specific objective for the *SRI for a Science of Learning Research Centre* is the delivery of a program of activities that develop a strong evidence base for learning processes to inform teaching practices.
In *Powering Ideas—An Innovation Agenda for the 21st Century*, the Australian Government proposed the Prime Minister’s Science, Engineering and Innovation Council (PMSEIC) adopt a foresight role, scanning the horizon to identify emerging trends over the forthcoming 20 to 50 years.

PMSEIC has implemented this initiative, commissioning several “foresight clusters” to identify future challenges and opportunities, with Expert Working Groups established to undertake more detailed studies of the identified trends.
Origins of Science of Learning Research Centre

In 2010, PMSEIC received the report of the Expert Working Group on Transforming Learning and the Transmission of Knowledge. Details of the Expert Working Group, the Terms of Reference and the Recommendations are contained in the Report. The full report is available at:

SRI-SLRC: Objectives 1

• The specific objective for the *SRI for a Science of Learning Research Centre* is the delivery of a program of activities that develop a strong evidence base for learning processes to inform teaching practices. The Centre will:

  – undertake highly innovative and internationally competitive research with a strategic focus on learning processes;

  – build critical mass through significant interdisciplinary collaboration, which may range from neuroscience and cognitive development to pedagogy and education technology, including development of national and international partnerships and linkages with leading researchers, institutions, education professionals and parents/carers;

  – build Australia’s research capacity by attracting researchers of a high international standing, as well as the most promising research students;
SRI-SLRC: Objectives 2

• strengthen capability by providing high-quality postgraduate and postdoctoral training environments for the next generation of researchers;

• engage with stakeholders and live educational settings to identify and explore opportunities for translation and development of learning processes research that will deliver benefits to Australia;

• address issues relating to Indigenous learners, learners in regional and remote locations, and learners from underprivileged backgrounds;

• address the role and integration of digital technology as a learning tool; and

• facilitate the transfer of knowledge through public education of the outcomes of learning processes research and provide support for policy development.
SRI-SLRC Funding and Budgets

ARC funding of **UP TO** $4 million per annum for four years will be provided to support:

- Personnel salaries (excluding Centre Director, CIs, PIs);
- PhD stipends;
- Teaching relief for CIs (up to $40 000 pa);
- Field work costs;
- Short-term project support for PIs;
- Essential equipment and computing costs for this Program;

Administering organisations expected to provide infrastructure and equipment for general use.

Scheme will NOT support costs such as capital works, bench fees, Centre Director, CI and PI salaries, fees such as HECS and HELP, costs not directly related to research, such as visas, insurance, membership fees and such like.
SRI-SLRC Selection Criteria

• Investigators (30%): research opportunity and performance evidence (ROPE); time and capacity to undertake mentorship; record of supervision and training

• Program Quality and Innovation (30%): including methods; conceptual framework; advancement of knowledge; wide level of collaboration, national/international linkages
SRI-SLRC Selection Criteria

• Feasibility and Benefit (20%): Program design and expertise will ensure timely completion; economic, environmental, cultural and/or social benefits to Australia; strategic approach to outreach and communication.

• Governance (10%): “Does the Program have an effective governance arrangement with the capacity to transcend disciplinary, geographical, professional and institutional boundaries and cultures, to achieve the Program’s vision?”

• Research Environment (10%): high quality intellectual support in each node or institution; Are necessary facilities available? Adequate strategies for dissemination/commercialisation.
6.1, 6.2, 6.3 Governance and organisational eligibility

- Administering (eligible) organisations only may submit grants
- “A number of Collaborating (eligible) organisations” must be involved
- A significant contribution, “of cash, in-kind or other material resources” by the Administering and Collaborating Organisations combined, of at least 30% of the total requested from the ARC
- The “Program must involve a number of partner organisations”, which must demonstrate a contribution—cash, in-kind or other material support
- Details of the collaborative arrangements must be provided, including role in strategic plan, and value of involvement
Centre Director

• “Must take significant intellectual responsibility for the proposed centre (Program), its conception, and any strategic decisions called for in its pursuit and communication of results”

• “Must have the capacity to make a serious commitment to the Program”
Governance, Structure and Reporting

A centre may comprise networked nodes, or operate as a “virtual centre”

A centre “must be established within the academic, administrative and financial governance structures of the Administering organisation”

A centre “must have an expert Advisory Committee to provide advice and strategic focus”

The centre must provide annual reports to the ARC and will report on a “range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be developed within the first six months of operation and approved by the ARC”

Mid-term through the funding period there will be “an external performance review”
Thank You