Research Support Fund (RSF)

The Research Support Fund (replacing the Federal Indirect Cost Program) is a Government of Canada fund that helps Canadian universities, colleges, and their affiliated research hospitals and institutes with the hidden costs of research.

• About the program [1]
• Eligible Expenses [2]
• Financial Administration Guide [3]

Definition of Indirect Costs

There a number of centralized institutional activities and services that support the research mandate of the University. These vary in scope and size but are critical to our success.

Institutional Activities and Support Services include the following areas:

• Library: operations and information acquisitions and resources
• Computing and Communications: computing infrastructure including central services, telecommunications and data services
• Physical Plant: utilities, housekeeping, maintenance, grounds, and planning services (excluding ancillary operations)
• Research Administration: Office of Research services including central animal services, grants and contracts administration and legislated requirements for reporting on grants and activities, communications and business development
• Central Support Services: a wide range of services ranging from payroll, accounting including research accounting, audit, environmental and occupational health, security services and purchasing to institutional costs such as legal and insurance costs

Each of these activities is vital to the overall effectiveness of the institution. Coordinating and delivering these services is a complex task and there are significant efficiencies to be obtained by managing them centrally.

Overview how University of Guelph Allocates the Research Support Funds

In general, the allocation of RSF to specific units that support research activity at the University is calculated as:

Total Unit Costs  X  Research % X Federal % X  RSF Grant / RSF eligible costs

Units containing University overhead costs are identified within the broad categories outlined as eligible by the RSF program. The specific units, by category, are as follows:


Resources (Library Operations, Library Information Resources, Central Computing Systems)

Management and Administration (Office of Research, Research Financial Services, Administrative Offices, Insurance, Research Admin Information Management System)
Regulatory (VP Research-General Risk, Animal Care Services, Environmental Health & Safety)

Intellectual Property (Catalyst Centre)

It is then determined what portion of the unit costs are used to support research activities, using various assumptions depending on the specific unit.

The total research costs determined above are prorated to reflect the portion of research that is federally funded using a three year average of total funding received from NSERC, SSHRC, CIHR and Networks of Centres of Excellences divided over total received from external sponsors (excluding RSF & CFI). This represents total costs eligible for RSF funding.

The actual amount of the RSF grant that the University receives does not cover the total amount of eligible costs, so the grant is attributed on a pro rata basis to the eligible costs of each of the units.

### Performance Indicators and Target Outcomes (2020/21)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eligible expenditure category</th>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Institutional performance objective</th>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Facilities</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Invest a portion of Research Support Fund grant in operations, upgrades and maintenance of the Advanced Analysis Centre (AAC).</td>
<td>To increase the use of centralized research scientific equipment through the University’s AAC (Advanced Analysis Centre) by offering cost-effective and efficient testing and experimental support services to researchers.</td>
<td>Continuous improvement in both volume of services processed, relevance of services provided and response times for research services across all AAC research service facilities. Increase usage by researchers across campus (students, staff, faculty).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research Resources</strong></td>
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<td>Invest portion of Research Support Fund to support new research data management (RDM) process (staff and IT resources)</td>
<td>To increase the volume of collection and improve the access to research data through a centralized research management data information system. Increase the number of Data Management Plans (DMP) created by researchers. Increase the use of the Canada-wide tool DMP Assistant to create plans.</td>
<td>Increase in total number of data sets and associated code books captured in the RDM system each fiscal year. Increase number of registered researchers and associated data management plans in the DMP Assistant system each fiscal year.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Management and Administration of an institution’s research enterprise</strong></td>
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<td>Invest portion of Research Support Fund to support e-system development for the administration of grants and contracts.</td>
<td>Complete research information database ‘rebuild’ that houses grants and contracts information for use by Office of Research Services staff.</td>
<td>Continued automation and process improvement of research administrative processes for staff and reporting to stakeholders.</td>
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<td><strong>Regulatory requirement and Accreditation</strong></td>
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<td>Invest portion of Research Support Fund for salary support of personnel within</td>
<td>Continued implementation of the Post-Approval Review (PAR) program in support of</td>
<td>Terms of Reference for teh post-Approval Review (PAR) program created and</td>
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Animal Care Services for Post Approval monitoring
PIs and their research teams when conducting research involving animals. approved by the Animal Care Committee; PAR Coordinator has met with PIs and/or conducted on-site events with 95% of UofG’s PIs using animals in research.

Invest portion of Research Support Fund to support faculty disclosures including communication, training, and support services to faculty. To be one of Canada’s most inventive universities. National ranking of universities by number of disclosures per faculty.

**Intellectual Property and Knowledge Mobilization**

**Target Outcome for 2019-20**
Increase total user fee income by 5% because as the equipment ages, maintenance costs increase. Income totals are dependent on factors out of AAC’s control such as the success of U of G faculty in getting grants.

With the AAC under the umbrella of the Office of Research, it is hoped that awareness in AAC services will increase and result in increased usership. We will aim to support new faculty upon arrival to ensure the long term viability of the AAC as a core facility.

An AAC Steering Committee (headed by the VP Research) was recently established to outline the future direction of AAC (eg. AAC director, funding support, equipment acquisition, grant applications). It is expected that facilities will be required to submit 5 y business plans to help this committee develop a new long-term sustainability model for the AAC. New budget models may be forthcoming.

**Eligible expenditure category**

**Research Facilities**

**Target Outcome for 2020-21**
UPDATE: Due to unforeseen operational limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, our target income for 2020-21 may not reach our previously estimated target. One facility was deemed essential and remained operational while the other 4 facilities did not resume limited operations until July 2020.

Once university operations are fully re-established following the COVID-19 closure, we expect to have 5% yearly increase in total user fee income. Total income is dependent upon factors beyond the AACs control such as the availability and scope of research grants, and the success of U of G faculty in obtaining those grants.

External user fee income increased significantly compared to last year ($104,362 in 2019-20, $76,886 in 2018-19) but the numbers are slightly inflated. There was a $15,000 prepayment made in MSF in 2019-20. External income fluctuates as it is highly dependent upon factors over.

**Reported Outcome**
In 2019-20, the target for user fee income for the AAC was exceeded by over 14%. This total includes both internal and external income. All AAC facilities, minus one, met or exceeded their target user fee income total. The remaining facility met 90% of its target. Projected incomes will be adjusted in 2020-21.

The total number of faculty members using the AAC decreased by 9% from last year (down from 163 to 148). As target total user fee income was exceeded, it means that faculty users are taking advantage of the varied services provided by the AAC facilities.

With the AAC under the umbrella of the Office of Research, it is hoped that awareness in AAC services will continue to increase and result in an increased user base. We will aim to support new faculty upon arrival to ensure the long-term viability of the AAC as a core facility. We are always searching for ways to expand and acquire new modern instrumentation in our facilities.

The university was closed on March 17, 2020 for the COVID-19 pandemic and we still met and exceeded our overall income targets for the fiscal year.

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which the AAC has no control such as the economy and provincial budgets. The continuing involvement of the AAC Steering Committee and the AAC Advisory Board will serve to oversee operations in order to make the AAC operationally sound while following effective business practices. An external review was scheduled to occur in June 2020 but that has been postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis. We are hopeful that the review will happen in 2021-22.

Although the AAC has been fairly consistent in user fee income totals, there will be continued variability in the yearly total user fee income due to such things as the availability of Tri-Agency funds, the global budget (for external users), the retirement of major users and the success of AAC grant applications to obtain new equipment (which can attract more users).

The AAC website continues to be upgraded and made more interactive and user friendly. All facility websites follow the same template which makes navigating in between sites much more fluid. The AAC Health and Safety Handbook was created and is updated regularly. Relevant documents are regularly reviewed and updated by AAC Health and Safety representatives and inspections continue in 2020-21. New safety protocols and signage were created to facilitate safe operations for both staff and facility users during the COVID-19 pandemic. One facility was deemed essential and was not closed. The remaining facilities were closed to users but staff were onsite periodically to maintain sensitive instrumentation.

We based our protocols on policies and recommendations defined by the University of Guelph.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Resources</th>
<th>Increase volume of data and usage statistics by 15%.</th>
<th>Data deposits: 27 new data sets added in 2019-20. Data deposit volume was 8.9GB. Dataset number decreased by 3.57%. This did not meet the target.</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Increase deposit statistics in FY2019-20 by 20%.</td>
<td>Increase deposit statistics in FY2020 - 21 by 20%.</td>
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<td>Usage statistics: Number of downloads during FY2019-20 was 49,780. Download number increased by 1,108.38%, which exceeded the target. Note that this large download increase coincides with the research of Google Dataset Search.</td>
<td>Increase number of researchers using the DMP Assistant in FY2020 - 21 by 15%.</td>
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<td>Increase number of researchers using the DMP Assistant in FY2019-20 by 15%.</td>
<td>DMP: There were 206 users in FY2019-20 and 172 consultations.</td>
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<td>Increase number of library consultations done on research data management/DMP tool.</td>
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<td>Management and Administration of an institution’s research enterprise</td>
<td>Testing, piloting and rollout (go-live) of the second module, grants and contracts.</td>
<td>The development of the business process management tool (internal research database) for back office administrative functions for grants and contracts processes had to pivot to a new platform/technology in October 2019 and significant progress has been made since that time. The basic tool is scheduled to be operational by December 2020.</td>
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<td>Roll-out (go-live) of back office business processing tool for grants and contracts for utilization by staff, stabilization of the tool (bug fixes), evaluation of the implementation, measurement of workflow improvements, refresher training for staff, and planning for future improvements and changes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regulatory Requirement and Accreditation</td>
<td>Strengthen support for the Research Ethics Office through the addition of a second permanent research ethics coordinator position.</td>
<td>A second regular full-time research ethics coordinator position was approved and the position was filled with a highly qualified incumbent.</td>
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<td>Terms of Reference for the post-Approval Review (PAR) program created and approved by the Animal Care Committee; PAR Coordinator has met with PIs and/or conducted on-site events with 95% of UofG’s PIs using animals in research.</td>
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<td>Intellectual Property</td>
<td>Maintain top five national ranking, in terms of inventions reported per research dollar.</td>
<td>For 2019-20, UG reported 195 inventions, with a 3-year average of 190. The 3-year average results in Maintain top five national ranking, in terms of inventions reported per research dollar.</td>
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approximately 1 invention per $0.8M of research, which places UG among the top Universities in the country in that category.

Communication Stories related to use of Research Support Funds at the University of Guelph

2019/20 - Enhancing research ethics at U of G [4]
2019/20 - Turning research knowledge into action [5]
2018/19 - Predatory journals: https://www.uoguelph.ca/research/article/predatory-journals [6]
2018/19 - Open Access: https://www.uoguelph.ca/research/article/open-access [7]
2017/18 - New animal care program gives researchers better insights [8]
2017/18 - Using Data Management Plans will keep you research data safe and give your research more exposure [9]
2016/17 - New office will help UofG research get out to the world [10]
2015/16 - Technology and expertise that foster innovation [11]

Reports by Fiscal Year

Click on one of the links below to view the University of Guelph's Summary of its use of the Research Support Funds by category, Impact Statements (relevant to the FICP program prior to 2015/16) and Annual Outcomes Report by fiscal year:

- Use of Funds [12] (pie graph by category)
- Impact Statements [13] (relevant to the FICP program which preceded RSF)
- Annual Outcomes Reports [14]

Source URL: https://www.uoguelph.ca/finance/report/research-support-fund

Links
[4] https://www.uoguelph.ca/research/article/enhancing-research-ethics-u-g
[5] https://www.uoguelph.ca/research/article/turning-research-knowledge-action
[6] https://www.uoguelph.ca/research/article/predatory-journals
[7] https://www.uoguelph.ca/research/article/open-access
[8] https://www.uoguelph.ca/research/article/new-animal-care-program-gives-researchers-better-insights
[12] https://www.uoguelph.ca/finance/reports/ficp-expenditures
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[14] https://www.uoguelph.ca/finance/reports/ficp-outcomes-reports