

Resource and Hiring Approval Group

Response to COVID-19 Pandemic Financial Implications

1. CONTEXT

Since January 2020, the University has been proactively managing a coordinated response to COVID-19 across all areas of its business; including teaching and learning, research, operations, and engagement activities. In response to COVID-19, the University's priorities remain:

- o Ensuring the health and wellbeing of our students, staff and community
- o Business continuity planning for the COVID-19 pandemic
- o Ensuring financial sustainability through implementation of expenditure response measures
- o Exercising financial constraint in order to retain core business and enable recovery
- o Ongoing engagement and student recruitment

Escalating Federal and State Government health measures are putting a serious financial strain on the University through their impact on student load.

Through this challenging period, the University's priority is to secure, as best as possible, the jobs of our continuing staff members.

The University is enacting several measures to reduce monthly operational expenditure and defer all non-essential capital expenditure. Major strategic projects will continue to advance to "investment ready" state only.

Griffith is a university renowned for its commitment to excellence, ethical behaviour and engagement. In these challenging times, we shall remain steadfast in ensuring measures to address the financial impact created by COVID-19 are developed in alignment with our values.

We seek to protect a solid foundation to ensure that our university, students, staff and broader community will be best placed to maximise any opportunities as part of the post COVID-19 recovery; so that we can continue to transform lives, and add to human knowledge and understanding in a way that creates a future that benefits all.

2. PURPOSE

All University staff recruitment activities have been put on hold (for continuing, fixed-term, contract or casual/sessional staff) until further notice. This includes any process that has not yet moved to the offer stage and all position reclassifications.

Within this context, the Resource and Hiring Approval Group (RHAG) has been established to ensure consistency and fairness across the University. On behalf of the University, the RHAG is accountable for determining the filling of any continuing, fixed-term, contractual or consultancy positions. The RHAG is accountable for ensuring the Executive Group approved reductions in casual and sessional budgets are achieved. The RHAG will observe the relevant University policy and procedures in their decision making and inform the requesting manager of decisions once made.

3. MEMBERSHIP

The RHAG will be chaired by a member of the University Executive, will be of sufficient size, representation and technical expertise to conduct its duties effectively, and shall have a minimum quorum of 50% (including one Executive).

3.1 Chair

The Chair will be the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research). In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chancellor will nominate a member of the Executive Group to undertake the role.

The Chair is accountable to the Vice Chancellor and Executive Group for achieving the financial reduction objectives.

3.2 Committee Members

The Committee will include senior level representation from the following functions:

- o Executive Group – Professor Scott Harrison
- o Academic Group – Professor Anne Tiernan
- o People and Wellbeing – Mr Ken Greedy
- o Corporate Services – Ms Jody Keys
- o Secretariat – Ms Tess Eames

Committee members may nominate a delegate on approval by the Chair following consultation with the Vice Chancellor.

3.3 Guests

The RHAG will, from time to time, require information from or the attendance of:

- o Executive Group member;
- o Head of Element;
- o Finance representative; or
- o Any other person the Committee deems appropriate.

4. ADMINISTRATION

4.1 Frequency of Meetings

The RHAG will convene once per week, or at any reasonable time at the request of the Chair.

Urgent considerations and decisions may be taken out of session by flying minute with the approval of the Chair.

4.2 Secretariat Support

Ms Tess Eames (or nominee when absent) from People and Wellbeing will be the Secretary.

The Secretary or their delegate will be responsible for the preparation and consultation of the meeting agenda, for accurately minuting all decisions of the Committee in consultation with the Chair, and for the timely tabling of all information relevant for decision making.

5. REPORTING

- 5.1 The Chair is responsible for providing reports and updates on decisions to the Vice Chancellor and Executive Group following each meeting.

6. FUNCTIONS

- 6.1 The RHAG will play a critical role in ensuring that the decisions to approve the hiring of resources is aligned to the University's strategy, initiatives and projects, and are designed to assist in, the achievement of the organisational strategy and goals.

- 6.2 The RHAG will make decisions to approve by exception:

- o Approval to fill a continuing position
- o Fixed Term appointments including renewals and extensions
- o Variations to employment contracts such as loadings, allowances or increases in hours/fractions
- o Externally fully funded professional positions
- o Hiring contractors or consultants or labour hire in lieu of position
 - o Contractor or consultancy requests would need to be initially reviewed by RHAG. Further requests within 20% of the value of the initial request would not need to be reviewed by RHAG and can proceed to engagement.
 - o All editing and proofreading consultancy engagements are not required to be reviewed by RHAG and can proceed to Finance for payment with the appropriate Executive Group member approval.
 - o Subcontractors in CCR projects are exempt from RHAG consideration and can proceed to engagement, with the condition that the services have been identified in the initial CCR project contract.
 - o If the subcontractor request is within 20% of the value of the services identified in the CCR project contract, this would not need to be reviewed by RHAG and can proceed to engagement.

- 6.3 Working with Heads of Element, the RHAG will be responsible for ensuring appropriate measures and monitoring are in place to achieve University casual and sessional targets. This will include working with Heads of Element to:

- o Recommend reduction targets for both casual and sessional staff by Element for Executive Group approval
- o Establishing measures for achieving the target for Heads of Element to follow
- o Monitoring fortnightly payroll data by Element to ensure the measures are achieving the desired targets, adjusting where necessary
- o Develop, where possible, an upfront monthly plan including sessional and casual staff, and contractors and consultants

- 6.4 Externally funded academic positions and research assistant positions are allowable and not subject to the RHAG review, provided the position is [>75%] externally funded and does not require any ongoing operational funding from the University or a liability for the University.

- 6.5 Where the RHAG consider a service level capacity could be compromised and a reduction in service levels result, consultation with the respective Head of Element and EG member must be undertaken before the decision is made.

7. PRINCIPLES FOR REVIEW

When determining whether to approve a position to be filled by exception, the RHAG will take the following into consideration:

- o Whether the position is critical for meeting external University obligations or ensuring business continuity (e.g. meeting a contractual obligation; maintaining a research experiment; supporting critical, ongoing functions).
- o Consideration of the level of capacity already experienced across the team and whether the combined reduction from budget profile presents a risk to delivery of teaching, research or services at a level reasonably expected of the team (refer 6.5).
- o Whether there is an existing staff member who would be able to take on some or all of the functions of the proposed new position or whether there are alternative methods for achieving the same end.
- o Whether the proposed appointment has been the result of a long-term search for someone with rare skills which will be critical to the long-term success of the University.
- o The proposed starting date, noting that particular care will need to be taken for candidates who are based overseas or interstate to ensure that they are not on the payroll until they are able to move to Queensland.
- o In the case of contract renewals, the length of time that the person under contract has been employed at the University and the proposed length of extension.
- o How likely the search is to find the right candidate in the current climate.
- o How long the search is likely to take (e.g. some significant positions may require 6–9 months to fill and might be commenced in 2020 for a 2021 start).

RHAG members will be required to declare conflicts of interest when applicable, and members absent themselves from decision making regarding relevant requests.

8. REVIEW OF TERMS

As part of a continuous improvement approach, the RHAG function or terms of reference shall be reviewed by the Vice Chancellor as the circumstances warrant.