FAQ - ARF Grant

**Professional Fees**

Can professional proof reading services for my paper be charged to the research grant?

Ans: Professional fees including fees paid to consultants are not allowable.

PI is hiring someone to vet his publication. Can this fee be charged under publication page charges?

Ans: This is not allowable as MOE view this as consultation charges.

**Publication costs**

PI need to pay half the cost of a publication joint with an external collaborator of which the invoice is addressed to the external collaborator. The invoice does not have PI name stated on it. How could the PI get the university to issue a check to the external collaborator using PI research funds?

Ans: It is possible to fund the publication cost if (i) the publication is for the research project that PI would like to fund from; and (ii) PI’s name will be listed in the publication. However, please ensure that publication cost is an approved item in the project's budget before charging to the account.

Can costs of reprints be allowable under publication costs?

Ans: Costs of reprints are not allowable by MOE as stated under the RGF supplementary.

**Permits and Identity Card**

Can the RA claim these expenses “Entry Permit, Re-Entry Permit, Identity Card” from ARF grants?

Ans: All expenses incurred on the AcRF grants should be research-related expenses. As such, fees incurred from the application of permits and identity card would not be considered fundable.

**Training costs**

PI would like to take a training course offered by A-star to enhance my research. The course will be held at night time in Singapore. PI want to confirm if PI can reimburse the course fee from his grant?

Ans: As long as the purpose of the training is for the research of that grant, PI can charge it to that grant. If the training course was not provided for in the original proposal, the PI would need to do a variation within the same vote before he charges the training to that grant.

**Overseas Travel**

Are PIs or graduate students allowed to claim their visa fee (for overseas travel) from research grants?

Ans: Visa fee for overseas travel is claimable for ARF research grants.
PI would like his postdoc to go to China to help him to procure an equipment for his research work. They need to remodel the equipment and there seem to be no local agent in Singapore. Can the travel cost to China be reimbursed?

Ans: Overseas travel budget is for the PI to attend conference, go on field trips or visit overseas researchers. Hence, based on that, travel cost to procure an equipment may not be allowable under the guidelines. Perhaps the PI could request for the equipment to be shipped over to Singapore since courier/ freight charges are allowable items under AcRF guidelines. If this is not an approved item in the project, PI may put up a variation request.

PI planned to attend a conference. For this purpose he submitted his abstract and paid the registration fee and booked the hotel. In addition, because he holds a Chinese passport, he applied to the US visa.

Unfortunately the US visa application took an unusually long time to process, and he has not received his visa yet. Therefore he has to cancel his travel since it is unlikely that he will be able to arrive there before the end of the conference

How should the PI claim the conference registration fee, the flight cancellation fee, visa application fee, and the hotel reservation cancellation charge (hotel charge may be waived). How should the PI proceed with the claim?

Ans: Under the AcRF guidelines, cancellation charges/fees will be considered as "Fines and Penalties" in the Fundable/Non-Fundable item list and such cost is actually deemed not allowable by MOE.

We have a recent case of a visitor who informed the PI that he could not make it 2 weeks before the scheduled visit. We had made a reservation for this visitor at NUS Visitors Lodge who requires at least 30 days’ notice for cancellation, otherwise one night’s stay S$128 + 7% GST is payable. PI would like to check if this can be paid by his grant.

Ans: MOE indicated that this is not an allowable item and should not be funded using AcRF research grant. Other fines and penalties include late payment and interest payment for outstanding bills etc.

**PI on no pay leave**

PI will be hosting a visitor from June 20 to Aug 19 but he will be on no pay leave from Aug 11 for 2 years. Can he still reimburse his visitor from Aug 11 to Aug 19? While he is on no-pay leave, can he do a claim from his research grant?

Ans: As PI will be on no-pay leave for extended period of time (2 years), to claim from his research grant, it is recommended that the visitor aligns his visit before PI goes on no-pay leave.

**PI resigned**

PI has resigned and he has his projects transferred to another NUS PI. Can you kindly advise on the following:
a) Will the inventorised items (equipment) purchased with the grant be tagged to the new PI who will take over the project? or

b) Can the HOD reallocate the equipment to other faculty members in the department who are not assigned as the new PI?

Ans: The department will "own" the equipment and hence, there is no need for any reallocation of the equipment to a faculty member. However, the on-going grant that was used to purchase the equipment should have more priority to the usage of this piece of equipment.

**Co-Investigator and Collaborator**

What is the difference between a co-Investigator and a collaborator?

If I work with a researcher who is based in the USA, can that person be a collaborator on the grant or not? The comment "Collaborators can be based overseas but the research has to be conducted in Singapore" Seems to suggest that the person cannot be a collaborator unless a work visit to Singapore is planned? Is that correct?

Ans: A Co-Investigator (Co-PI) is usually more involved in the project as compared to a collaborator. A Co-PI has to be full-time faculty of NUS, NTU, SMU, whereas collaborators may be based overseas. The researcher based in the USA can be named as a collaborator but all the research work funded under the Tier 2 grant has to be conducted in Singapore (ie. The grant cannot be used to fund any research in the USA or outside of Singapore).

In the soft copy of ARC, Tier 1 & Tier 2 application form, it stated: “3c. COLLABORATOR(S) (Please add if there are more collaborators. Please note that collaborators have to be fully-based in Singapore. Fractional appointments in Singapore are not allowed.)”

Can collaborators be overseas collaborators?

Ans: The Tier 2 guidelines require all collaborators to be fully based in Singapore. However, MOE recognised that adding an overseas collaborator could strengthen the proposal and hence allows PIs to propose involvement of overseas researcher in the Tier 2 project, but not as a collaborator in the project team. The overseas individual should nevertheless document his commitment to the project in writing (email will suffice) and how he would contribute to the project should be detailed in the proposal under "Investigators" of the proposal details.

**External Reviewers**

What is the definition of external reviewers required for ARF grants? Do people outside NUS qualify or must they be overseas reviewers? Does a person from NTU qualify to be external reviewer?

Ans: External Reviewers should be outstanding experts from outside NUS with their research area within the domain of PI’s research. We would advise that PI indicate someone, preferably from outside Singapore. MOE has also previously indicated that even though PI may indicate someone local (but
outside NUS), they would prefer and would most likely choose the overseas reviewers instead of local ones when seeking for external reviews. For more information on nominating an external reviewer, please refer to Annex E of the RGF Supplementary.

**Visiting Professors**

Visiting Professors are usually given University Housing and not Housing Allowance. Please advise if we are allowed to charge transit accommodation and the difference between market rate and subsidized rental paid by staff for the University Housing to MOE grants. Will this be applicable to other Visiting appointments like Visiting Associate Professor/Visiting Senior Research Fellow/Visiting Research Fellow?

Ans: Transit accommodation and the difference between market rate and subsidized rental paid by Visiting Staff for the University Housing are chargeable to MOE grants as these 2 benefits are within our guidelines. In addition, this will be applicable to other visiting appointments like Visiting Associate Professor/Visiting Senior Research Fellow/Visiting Research Fellow. Housing expenses are not allowed for full-time research appointments.

**Research Scholars**

We have a supervisor who is using his Tier 2 grant RS to support his student from Aug 2011. This student is admitted in Aug 2009. He was on NUS RS for 2 years before switching to his supervisor’s grant RS. Can the supervisor use the remaining years of grant RS to support other student after this student reaches the end of his 4th year?

Ans: MOE guidelines did not explicitly state that it is not allowed.

The PIs were given 2 RS in their grant and have only used one RS since the grant started. They would like to find out if the remaining research scholarship in their grant can be used to fund a PhD student who has just finished a PhD in Physics at NUS. In other respects, he could be considered a fresh research student in mathematics. The other, possibly relevant issue is that as a student from China he has a bond to serve by working in Singapore.

Our questions:
1) Would such a student be eligible for another RS? He was on RS for his PhD at Physics Dept.
2) Can the RS of this Tier 2 grant be used since it’s already in the 2nd year? From the guidelines, PIs are allowed to draw on the RS funding for 4 years from project start date provided the scholars are not engaged in other projects

Ans: 1) The student is no longer entitled to further MOE subsidy as he was already on RS for his first PhD at Physics.

2) The RS can be used regardless of which year it is in, so long as the period of funding does not exceed the 4 years from the project start date.
We noted that AcRF Tier 2 research scholarship funding can be for a period of up to 4 years from the project start date. Can the grant be further extended to fund a student’s 5th year research scholarship? If the scholar is not currently on the project but PI wants to place him on the project, is it possible?

Ans: PIs are allowed to draw on the funding for up to 4 years from the project start date, if the Tier 2 research scholars are not engaged in any other projects. The statement above is meant for students who are MOE Tier 2 students, and even then, it is only up to 4 years. Since the student has not been a MOE Tier 2 RS, it is not possible.

MOE allows the Tier 2 Research Scholarships to be funded for new recruits or existing students who have only been in their graduate studies for 1 year or less. For these existing students, they should also be agreeable to change their research topic/ thesis accordingly. Hence it cannot be used to fund a 5th year student.

For Tier 2 grants, is the budget for the grant disbursed in full from the start or by FY? Similarly, is the budget for Research Scholarship disbursed in full from the start, or by FY?

Ans: Universities should in the first instance pay for the expenditure incurred for approved projects and subsequently claim for reimbursement from MOE. MOE will disburse the AcRF Tier 2 grant, including IRC and TSF funding, as reimbursement for the expenditure incurred. The grant disbursement for AcRF Tier 2 - IRC and TSF will be based on the actual expenditure less exceptional items (as listed in 3.1 and 3.2) incurred by approved projects. The above applies for Tier 2 RS as well.

**Exchange Students**

An exchange student from EPFL (Switzerland) joined my group for his Masters Project. He was matriculated as a non-graduating student for this 2 semesters (by order to Deanery) and will then return back home. Because EPFL is technically not an exchange university, the student is obliged to pay tuition at a rate of $900 per semester. I would like to cover his 2x $900 semester tuition fee (because he is a student. Can I do so?

Ans: MOE does not allow any students to be hired as paid student assistant (i.e graduate student researcher). ARF grants cannot be used to pay for student tuition fees.

**Undergraduate Students**

PI would like to enquire if they are any guidelines on the financial support an undergraduate student can get from ARF grant?

Ans: Undergraduates can be employed as part-time undergraduate student assistants or undergraduate student researchers. Besides these, there is no other financial support that can be rendered to an undergraduate student from ARF grant.

In PI’s MoE Tier 2 grant, PI has a budget for a “Student Assistant” per year for 3 years. However, since they were renovating and moving lab last year, they were not able to hire a student in the last
year. Thus, is it possible for PI to hire 3 students at the same time during this summer break (ie: ~3 months per student) with the same budget?

Ans: Given that PI’s project has been approved 1 Student Assistant, PI may only hire one headcount at any one time. If PI wants to hire more than 1 headcount, PI may need to put up a variation request for approval.

**Research Center of Excellence (RCE) members**

Are RCE members eligible for MOE Tier 2 grant?

Ans: RCE members are not eligible for AcRF grants as RCE have been given separate funding from MOE for their research.

**Indirect Research Costs**

Is the IRC for Tier 2 ARF Grant is auto calculated by MOE or the PI has to budget in the ARC proposal submission?

Ans: IRC is computed by MOE. Hence, PI does not need to budget in this cost.

Can IRC be used to purchase desktops?

Ans: DRA advised that usually desktops would be provided to the PIs by department. Thus if the desktop needs to be replaced, it should be replaced by departments instead. Unless the previous desktop is not provided by department then PI may use the IRC to buy the desktop if the desktop is intended for research use. It is mutual understanding that departments would provide desktops for PI use. In addition, the desktop for research purposes which the PI wants to claim from IRC would be one which is very special and have specifications which a normal desktop would not have and is needed for research use.

Can PI use his other Tier 2 grant IRC component to pay for this shortfall in purchase of equipment in Tier 1 grant?

Ans: IRC accounts are to be used to support expenses that are research related but that are not directly identifiable to any specific projects. Basing on this guideline, the PI is not to use the Tier 2 grant IRC to pay for the shortfall.

If a PI change department within the faculty eg from Chemistry to DBS, how should the IRC be split?

Ans: The PI moved from Chemistry to DBS. Considering both departments still fall under FOS, faculty IRC account will be under Faculty of Science. IRC accounts under PIs will not be discriminated between his/her appointment(s) in different departments/faculties. In this case, the grantor is MOE and an IRC account will be defined to receive the funds from MOE. This account will reside with the PI’s primary department, which is now DBS.
Can IRC be used for supporting some research related activities such as research retreat? I am preparing a research retreat for my group to discuss our future research directions of our group. I wonder whether IRC can be used to support some of the travel expenses (bus and ship transportation and hotel accommodation etc) of my group members.

Ans: According to NUS' guidelines on PI's IRC, PI cannot use the IRC funds for the following:

a. Hospitality expenses
b. Graduate scholarship support
c. Staff welfare, bonding, recreation, gifts, refreshments
d. Expenses associated directly with research project.

Can PI’s IRC grant be used for reimbursement for student aboard overseas?

Ans: PI’s IRC grant cannot be used to invite students abroad to come over to Singapore.

**Approving authority for FRC grants for extension more than 6 months**

Ans: The approving authority for FRC grant request for extension for 1 year or more should be DRA (Division of Research Administration) of DPRT office as the norm for extension is only for 6 months. Extension for 6 months for FRC grants would be approved by Vice Dean (Research).

**Is RCA needed?**

If a co-PI of an ARF grant is employed under NUS and holds a joint appointment with an external party, will an RCA be needed?

Ans: It depends on where the research work will be conducted. If the research work is conducted in NUS, an RCA will not be required. If the research work is conducted at the external place, an RCA will be required.

**Employment of manpower under CSI**

Under the FRC grant – I have manpower but the manpower is going to work with my collaborator in CSI. The person is going to work in YLL SoM – at CSI. My enquiry is whether the employment can be handled by CSI (ie staff of CSI, not pharmacy) but the EOM is paid from pharmacy grant.

Ans: If the manpower is working for the purpose of the FRC project and for the deliverables specified in the FRC project and he is also working in Singapore. There should not be a problem using FRC grant money to fund him. It would be tricky if the manpower is working with the collaborator overseas.

**MOE Grant cannot be used to invite students abroad to come to Singapore**

Can MOE grant be used to invite students abroad to come over to Singapore?

Ans: MOE grant does not allow expenses related to bringing students abroad to Singapore.
How do we define percentage of PI's time spent on the research project?

How do we define percentage of PI's time spent on the research project (FRC or ARC) in the application form?

Ans: The percentage of PI's time spent on the research grant is defined either as a relation of his total duties which include teaching and research etc or as a percentage of research duties meaning all his grants. It is preferable to define it in terms of the first option.