

Ministry of Education

SCIENCE OF LEARNING GRANT

Administrative Guidelines and Policies

(With effect from 20 April 2026)

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Ministry of Education (MOE) Science of Learning (SoL) grant supports science-based research (which includes but is not limited to neuroscience, cognitive science and technology that augment human cognitive abilities) that could explicate the principles, processes and mechanisms of learning and skills acquisition in order to generate implementable and scalable interventions that improve education and skills development, and hence advance Singapore's human potential.
- 1.2. There are two types of SoL grant, to support cutting-edge research, develop effective interventions/programmes, to build a vibrant multi-disciplinary SoL research community and strengthen the research-policy-practice nexus.
- (a) Type A – Use-Inspired Basic and Applied Research, for knowledge creation that can potentially lead to applications in teaching, learning and skills development

Sub-Type	Budget
A1 – Large-scale research projects, with sub-projects.	Up to \$5M (including 30% indirect research cost (IRC)) per award, for up to 5 years
A2 – Research projects.	Up to \$2.5M (including 30% IRC) per award, for up to 5 years
A3 – Seed grants for proof-of-concepts and/or support young investigators.	Up to \$500K (including 30% IRC) per award, for up to 3 years

- (b) Type B – Development and Translation to develop implementable and scalable applications for teaching, learning and skills development and assess their efficacy and effectiveness

Type	Budget
B1 – Large-scale development and translation projects, with sub-projects.	Up to \$5M (including 30% IRC) per award, for up to 5 years.

Type	Budget
B2 – Projects to develop and test implementable applications.	Up to \$2.5M (including 30% IRC) per award, for up to 5 years
B3 – Seed grants for early-stage translation, proof-of-value and/or support young investigators.	Up to \$500K (including 30% IRC) per award, for up to 3 years

- 1.3. Funded projects will be required to share the data with government agencies. The datasets can then be used by public agencies, non-government entities and researchers to (a) further spur and expand research efforts into this area, (b) generate useful and applied interventions or products to develop human potential through public, academic and even potentially commercial sector collaborations, and (c) improve public policies and programmes.

2. Application and Approval of Project Grant

Application

2.1. Lead Principal Investigators (Lead PI) must hold a primary/joint appointment¹ in the Singapore-based Autonomous Universities (AUs)², Polytechnics, Institute of Technical Education, A*STAR research institutes or Campus of Research Excellence and Technological Enterprise entities (CREATE) in order to be eligible³ for SoL funding.

2.2. Researchers with primary/joint appointments⁴ in these as well as other publicly funded institutions, e.g., hospitals, can participate in the call as co-investigators. MOE officers with expertise relevant to the project can participate as co-investigators with justifications on the role⁵.

¹ There should be a minimum time commitment of 9 months, per calendar year, in these institutions.

² The AUs are: Nanyang Technological University, National University of Singapore, Singapore Institute of Technology, Singapore Management University, Singapore University of Social Sciences and Singapore University of Technology & Design.

³ PIs who are awarded grants must continue to meet this criterion throughout the project period. Should such PIs be on No Pay Leave (or not serve duties at the Institution) for more than 3 months in a Calendar Year during the project, they will no longer be eligible for the grant for that Calendar Year.

⁴ There should be a minimum time commitment of 9 months, per calendar year, at eligible institutions. Co-PIs awarded grants must continue to meet this criterion throughout the project period.

⁵ MOE officers who wish to participate in SoL projects are requested to approach the SoL

2.3. Researchers in the private sector and other entities can only participate as collaborators.

2.4. SoL funding can only be spent on research conducted in Singapore. Unless expressly allowed by MOE, the funds or any part thereof shall not be channelled to fund research and development activities overseas. Expenditure on overseas fieldwork must be specifically provided for in the research proposal and approved as part of the grant.

2.5. Similar versions or part(s) of the current SoL proposal should not be submitted to other agencies for funding.

2.6. PIs must declare if they have submitted similar proposals before, and highlight any substantial changes⁶. If they do not do so, their proposals may not be viewed favourably.

2.7. Prior to submission, all proposals have to be verified by the Offices of Research (OREs) and endorsed by the Director of Research (DOR). PIs should not communicate with MOE directly. OREs shall inform the PIs of the terms set out in this guideline and ensure compliance by the applicants.

2.8. MOE will support the IRC at a flat rate of 30% of the total qualifying direct costs⁷ of each approved SoL project.

2.9. Appeals for unsuccessful applications will not be considered.

Grant Management

2.10. Please refer to the general “Guidelines on the Management of Competitive R&D Grants” in Enclosure 1, which apply to the management of SoL grants.

2.11. Approved SoL grants will be subject to the general “Terms and Conditions of a Competitive Grant” stipulated in Enclosure 2.

2.12. The existing policies that apply to students on MOE Postgraduate by Research (PGR) scholarships similarly apply to students funded by the SoL

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⁶ Examples of substantial changes could include: (i) using a similar methodological approach for a substantially different question, and (ii) using a very different methodological approach to address a similar issue.

⁷ This refers to the sum of the budgets in the following votes: Expenditure on Manpower (EOM), Equipment, Overseas Travel and Other Operating Expenses (OOE).

grants. These include, but are not limited to, policies on stipend differentiation and the Graduate Assistantship Programme (GAP).

2.13. Funding for the SoL research scholarships is capped at the duration of the project. Funding should only be used to cover tuition fees and stipends, in line with research scholarships funded by the MOE Research Scholarship Block (RSB). Research scholarship funding is ring-fenced and cannot be transferred to other categories.

2.14. The Institutions shall continue to manage the transition of students from SoL research scholarship to MOE RSB once the project scholarship funding expires at the end of the project or when the SoL Research scholarship budget has exhausted, whichever is earlier.

2.15. Students on SoL research scholarships are not permitted to be concurrently employed (and receive salaries) on other MOE-funded grants, i.e., there should be no double-dipping of stipends and salaries from MOE-funded grants.

2.16. The SoL funds, including IRC, is provided on a reimbursement basis. The Institution should therefore pay for the expenditure incurred for approved projects first, and subsequently claim for reimbursement from MOE.

2.17. Institutions and PIs should not commit to any expenditure before receiving the funding approval from MOE. Similarly, the Institutions and PIs should not commit to any expenditure after the project end date.

2.18. Institutions and PIs are to follow the Institutions' procurement procedures and guidelines to ensure that all purchases made using SoL grants are value-for-money and processes are transparent.

2.19. Institutions are required to **ensure that there are adequate internal financial controls and processes as well as adequate cost control measures to ensure that resources are utilised prudently.**

Ethics Approval

2.20. In the event that the ethics and other research-related approvals are withdrawn or suspended, PIs are to inform MOE, through their ORE, of such decisions immediately. MOE reserves the right to withhold funding if these approvals are not obtained, withdrawn or suspended.

3. Training & Education Programmes

3.1. Wherever necessary, MOE may request PIs and/or the research team to participate in education-related programmes and professional development workshops, such as:

- (a) Presenting their research work in MOE schools and institutions of higher learning;
- (b) Organising teacher enrichment programmes; or
- (c) Supporting MOE's initiatives in creating a research culture in schools and institutions of higher learning.

4. Grant Variation

4.1. Lead PIs should submit all grant variation requests through the Host Institutions' OREs, using the appropriate forms:

No.	Type of Variation	Form
1	Amendments to Projects	RGF1
2	Fund Virement	RGF2

4.2. PIs should refer to "Guidance for Processing Variation Requests" (Annex A) in their preparation of the variation requests to ensure that all supporting documents have been duly completed.

4.3. For requests that require MOE's approval, OREs should first evaluate the requests based on the considerations, norms and checks listed in Annex A and make recommendations for MOE's consideration.

4.4. For all variation requests, MOE's decision is final and appeals will not be considered. **Retrospective variation requests will not be allowed, unless there is compelling justification for submission of a late variation request.**

5. Closure of Accounts

5.1. The Host Institution Office of Finance should use RGF6 (Closing of Research Project Account) to close the account for the entire batch of SoL projects and return any unspent funds to MOE, if any, upon completion of all projects within the same batch.

6. Compliance of Administrative Guidelines

6.1. In the event of non-compliance of the administrative guidelines, MOE reserves the right to:

- (a) withhold or withdraw the funding;
- (b) disqualify the Lead PI from subsequent MOE competitive funding; and/or
- (c) carry out any action as MOE deems appropriate.

7. Miscellaneous

7.1. MOE reserves the right to change, including without limitation, modify, delete or replace the information and materials set out in this document unilaterally. MOE shall notify the Host Institutions in writing, enclosing the revised terms and conditions, accordingly.

7.2. As and when directed by MOE, the Institutions will allow an auditor appointed by MOE to carry out an audit of its financial and related processes/procedures pertaining to the utilisation of SoL grants.

Guidance for Processing Variation Requests
(Effective from 20 April 2026)

Annex A

S/N	Type of Request	Key considerations	Norms	Supporting Document required	Types of checks by ORE
1.	Virements	The critical role of the proposed items to project outcome and the reason it was not budgeted in original proposal.	Fund virement is to support the project only, not for support of “follow-on” research ⁸ .	RGF2	RGF2 is duly completed and endorsed. All supporting document attached. Check is done on whether requested item is in the approved budget and whether requested item is fundable.
		Cost-savings principle	It is possible for PI to use cost-savings within approved project cost to purchase essential new items not previously budgeted. However, purchase must be based on needs; availability of savings is not a reason for new purchase.	Latest statement of account	Fund availability
				Relevant quotations	Reasonableness of quotes by cross-referencing similar purchase or independent checks. Whether proposed purchase items are already available in institutions, or can be more cost-effectively leased.
		Eligibility	PIs with overdue annual and/or final reports are not allowed to submit any virement requests.	N.A.	The PI has no outstanding annual/final reports for any MOE grants.
1 a)	Virements into Expenditure on Manpower (EOM)	If new headcount is requested, PI has to explain the staff’s job scope		Job scope of additional EOM	ORE needs to assess the reasonableness of request, e.g., the job scope is not too small for the headcount. If the need is short-term, ORE needs to assess if part-time manpower is more appropriate
1 b)	Virements for Visiting Professor (VP) /Visitors ⁹	Relevance and contribution to project outcome	The need for VP/visitors must be driven by project need (e.g., not because institutions require VP to give public lecture or other non-project activities.)	Curriculum Vitae/bio of prospective candidate	ORE needs to assess the role and expertise of the visitor.
		Track record		Job scope/deliverables of VP	ORE needs to assess reasonableness of request, e.g., the job scope is commensurate with the duration requested. Particularly, ORE needs to assess if the work can be done via email/tele-video conferencing.
		Duration of stay	The job scope and deliverables of VP must be clear for assessment of the duration required of his/her service.		
2 a)	Departure ¹⁰ of PI/Co-PI; Change of PI/Co-PI	Suitability of proposed PI/Co-PI	Ability of the new PI/Co-PI to capture the benefits and achieve the intended objectives of the project.	Information on outgoing PI/Co-PI: last day of work, name of institution he will be joining, etc. CV of proposed new PI/Co-PI/ Job scope of replacement PI/Co-PI/Letter of recommendation. Written confirmation from HR that the proposed PI/Co-PI meets the eligibility criteria.	Application should reach MOE 3 months in advance before PI/Co-PI leaves (for contract expiry/termination cases; sabbatical or other extended leave) and as soon as practicable for resignation cases. ORE should consider working closely with HR and schools to ensure timeliness especially in submitting change of PI requests. ORE needs to determine whether the proposed PI /Co-PI is eligible based on the eligibility criteria and whether he/she is suitable and has the skills to continue and complete the research work. If in doubt, request for Letter of recommendation from current employer of proposed PI/Co-PI.
		Applicable to Departure of PI: MOE reserves the right to terminate the grant if:		Applicable to Departure of PI: Mitigation Plan: Department and new PI should jointly develop a	ORE needs to assess the feasibility of the mitigation plan. Where the PI leaves the institution less than 1 year after the start of the project, ORE should explain why the PI is doing so, despite declaring that he/she has no plans to leave the institution within the

⁸ An exception is for PIs whose requests for 6-month extensions to explore additional scope are approved.

⁹ Visitors includes staff who have short-term appointments with the Institution and concurrently retain full-time positions overseas. This is regardless of the job title such staff may have (e.g., Research Fellow/Visiting Research Fellow) at the institution. Also includes speakers and participants of conferences/events organised as part of the project.

¹⁰ This includes resignations, retirement, extended no-pay leave, extended sabbatical leave as well as other instances where the PI/Co-PI may be considered to no longer meet the eligibility criteria.

S/N	Type of Request	Key considerations	Norms	Supporting Document required	Types of checks by ORE
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No suitable replacement is found; Proposed PI is rejected; or New PI cannot achieve the necessary outcomes. 		<p>mitigation plan to sustain/resuscitate the project, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> setting new milestones/KPIs taking steps to ensure students' graduation is not disrupted committing to put in all necessary resources and time <p>The plan should be signed off by both the head of department and the new PI.</p> <p>Should the PI plan to be away for more than 3 contiguous months in a year and/or cease active involvement in the project, the Host Institution should submit a mitigation plan to MOE at least 2 months in advance, to explain how the project will be kept on track. The institution may also wish to propose a covering PI. The mitigation plan must be endorsed by the department and DOR.</p>	duration of the project when accepting the grant. Please note that change of PI requests arising from PI resignations will generally be viewed less favourably in the first year.
2 b)	Project Extension	Impact on deliverables and usefulness of final research outcome in view of the delay.	To ensure currency of research, extension will be capped at 6 months.	Evidence of satisfactory progress (e.g., copies of publication arising from the research, abstracts of conferences attended etc).	<p>For extension requests that are motivated by project delays, a cap of 3 months will be applied.</p> <p>MOE may consider a no-cost extension of 6 months only if the PI is able to demonstrate excellent scientific progress. Such PIs can use this extension to explore follow-on research that is beyond the original scope of the project. As a general rule of thumb, the PI should have met the key project deliverables (i.e., publications and conferences) before submitting such requests. PI must submit a 1-page write-up on the additional research to be done during the extension.</p>
		Cost implications	Must be within approved budget.	Revised Project Implementation Schedule (Gantt Chart).	
2 c)	Change of scope	Change of scope to pursue different research objectives is not allowed; this should be submitted as a new proposal.		N.A.	N.A.
2 d)	Post-project Conference Travel	Timing and importance of conference.		Acceptance of conference presentation/paper.	The conference presentation/paper should be accepted before the project end-date. The conference is within 3 months from the project end-date. Variation request should be submitted to MOE within a month from the date the conference presentation/paper is accepted. ORE must confirm that the conference presentation arises from work supported by the grant. DOR/HOD should explain why it is important for the PI to participate in the conference.
2 e)	Change of Host Institution by the PI	Impact on the project.		<p>Variation request endorsed by DORs of both the original and new Host Institution.</p> <p>Transition plan, showing how the transfer will take place with minimal disruption.</p>	ORE needs to assess the feasibility of the transition plan.
2 f)	Termination	Alternative options to termination	Other options should be explored to ensure that the best outcome is achieved with the investment already made.	Department report: Department should prepare a report that includes:	ORE to assess the adequacy of the report and winding-down budget/plan.

S/N	Type of Request	Key considerations	Norms	Supporting Document required	Types of checks by ORE
		Orderly conclusion of project	A winding-down budget should be drawn up for MOE's consideration. This covers expenses necessary to effect an orderly conclusion, for a period not exceeding 3 months from the date of termination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of what went wrong for the project • What are the alternatives to terminations and why they are not applicable in this case • Preventive measures to avoid future occurrence. <p>The report should be signed off by both the head of department and the director of research.</p>	