

DUSP Under-recovery Pilot Program

January 2024

This memo specifies how DUSP will operationalize the Institute's new Under-recovery (UR) Pilot Program. This program represents a change in how the central administration invests resources into *research* projects that incur [under-recovery](#) due to the grant source (e.g., a foundation). These guidelines and eligibility criteria aim to ensure that DUSP uses these funds in a way that supports our core mission, our strategic priorities, and the career development of our faculty. These criteria may be adjusted if the need to manage under-recovery costs arises.

Fundamental Assumptions:

1. This program is primarily oriented towards supporting [research](#) funded by foundations.
2. This program is currently in a pilot phase, which allows for testing and refinement of the process.
3. VPR has determined that adjusting predetermined criteria is more effective than evaluating each proposal on a case-by-case basis in controlling costs.
4. DUSP owns the allocation, not the Dean's Office.
5. The Dean and VPR do not participate in daily under-recovery decisions.
6. DUSP has the authority to approve proposals on its own, with limited exceptions ([see VPR policy here](#)).
7. DUSP should consider how deviating from this guidance may affect the submission location of proposals.

Guiding Principles for UR Proposal Approvals:

1. Faculty members are not required to provide funding for under-recovery.
2. Funding allocations may be utilized to support non-faculty proposals.
3. The proposed research grant resources should go towards supporting student research assistants (e.g., graduate RAs) and necessary supervision and/or partnerships.
4. During the first year of the pilot program, determining the real demand for under-recovery support is a key objective. Thus, we encourage all qualifying PIs to submit qualifying projects for UR consideration.

DUSP-Specific Criteria for UR Proposal Approvals

Initial Proposals to DUSP for UR should clearly articulate how the proposed research project will fulfill the following criteria:

1. Advancing research in one or more of DUSP's strategic priorities (achieving racial justice; enhancing multi-racial democratic governance; tackling the climate crisis; closing the wealth gap).
2. Fostering faculty collaborations.
3. Supporting the research trajectory of pre-tenure faculty.
4. Demonstrating potential to evolve into a larger-scale research project/program.
5. Empowering Change. How, specifically the project will play a role in creating positive change? (what material or social change will the research induce, and how will these changes materialize?)
6. Context and History. How the research project incorporates or understands context and/or history (in the research question itself, methods, data, materials, team formation, or other aspects of the project).

7. Relationship to Community. How does the project work with communities in its efforts to expose disparities, build on community strengths and capacities, understand a problem(s), strength(s)/asset(s)?

Process

DUSP's pilot will operate through a two-step procedure:

1. Before developing a full proposal for UR approval, the qualifying PI should send to the DUSP Dept Head and the DAF:

- a brief (e.g., one-page) research project synopsis, summarizing the project, including how the proposal follows the guiding principles and fulfills the DUSP-specific criteria;
- an initial (draft) budget outlining the proposed expenses (including student support) and estimated UR request.

2. Upon initial approval, the PI can develop the full proposal and budget (working with the relevant DUSP staff to ensure compliance with requisite budgetary processes). The full proposal and budget are still subject to review to ensure the budget, UR amount, and project proposal remain consistent with that approved in Step 1. After this review and approval, the proposal and budget can be submitted to RAS.¹

In case of non-approval, at step 1 or 2, the PI can appeal the decision; DUSP Program Group Heads will decide on such appeals.

¹ The central administration has announced that they will be providing new functionality within Research@MIT to facilitate the submission of proposals incurring UR at which point proposal submission through the new app will be expected.