

Guidelines for the use of research funds resulting from banked credits conversion (BCCA)

Effective Date: August 1, 2023

Originating Office: Research and Restricted Financial Management, Financial Services

SCOPE

This Guide pertains only to CUFA probationary or tenured faculty members. Extended term appointment (ETA's), limited term appointments (LTA's), and librarians cannot convert banked credits to research funds.

PURPOSE

The fundamental nature of a BCCA account is to support research and research creation activities, and not result in personal gain for the owner of the research account.

DEFINITIONS

Account Opening: a sub-team within RRFM that is responsible for research and non-research account set up and creation.

ETA: Extended term appointment (ETA) means a renewable appointment for a fixed term.

Event: an occasion related to current or future research grant applications/ proposals relationship building and hosting of academic visitors and collaborators

Gift: cash or in-kind items provided freely (i.e., requiring no payment in return), as a token of appreciation, respect and/or goodwill.

Internal Member: a Concordia University faculty member

LTA: Limited term appointment (LTA) means an appointment which is limited to a stated term, and which carries no implication that the appointee shall be reappointed or considered for tenure.

Office of Research (OOR): The Office of Research (OOR) provides the services required to support the development and growth of funded research and scholarship at Concordia University. It is a professional service unit reporting to the Vice-President, Research and Graduate Studies.

Personal Gain: a benefit or advantage to a particular person rather than to the account-funded research/activities.

PI: Primary investigator

Research and Restricted Financial Management (RRFM): Research & Restricted Financial Management (RRFM) is a unit in Financial Services and reports to the Chief Financial Officer. RRFM provides financial management and control on behalf of external stakeholders, as well as an infrastructure to facilitate the management of the funds to internal stakeholders.

Research Compliance: a sub-team within RRFM whose mandate is to ensure compliance on research and restricted financial management.

PREAMBLE

Full-time probationary and tenured faculty members can convert banked credits to research funds.

Given that banked credits have an impact on annual workload assignments, faculty members who wish to convert eligible credits to research funds rather than bank or apply them to their workload will need to discuss this with their unit head and communicate their request to the Dean's Office

A faculty member may choose to convert part or all their banked credits to research funds, prorated at the rate stated in the CUFA collective agreement.

Only credits banked for activities completed can be converted to research funds.

Once the conversion takes place, it cannot be reverted.

As per the CUFA Collective Agreement, credits in excess of nine (9) are paid out at the rate specified in the agreement. Faculty members can opt to convert to research funds in this case as well.

The university reserves the right not to convert banked credits on a given year for one or more requests.

DEADLINE TO REQUEST CONVERSION

Given that banked credits have an impact on workload assignment and that Faculties have different timelines to survey their faculty members for teaching preferences and for planning the academic year, the deadlines for the workflow are the purview of each Faculty.

PROCESS

The creation of a BCCA-Banked Credit Conversion Account will be achieved as follows:

- The "REQUEST FOR CONVERSION OF BANKED CREDITS TO RESEARCH ACCOUNT BCCA" must be completed by the PI, the Associate Dean Faculty Affairs/Relations, Faculty Financial Officer and approval from the Chair must also be received.
- Once the form is complete, it will be sent to OOR to create an INOA.
- The INOA will then be sent to account openings in Research and Restricted Financial Management (RRFM) for account creation as normal. This form must also be used if the PI already has an existing BCCA and requires the conversion of banked credits.

N.B the PI will only ever have a single BCCA account created.

TERM & TERMINATION:

BCCA accounts will have a 5-year term with automatic renewals (the “Term”).

The Start date of the BCCA account must be determined by the FFO and indicated on the “REQUEST FOR CONVERSION OF BANKED CREDITS TO RESEARCH ACCOUNT.” Should no start date be indicated, the start date will default to the date OOR receives the request.

The BCCA shall be automatically terminated in the case of the departure or death of the BCCA account holder and is not eligible to be paid out upon retirement.

Financial Services and the ADR office reserves the right to request a justification and spending plan satisfactory to both offices where there is an accumulation of funds or limited activity/spending in any given year during the Term.

EXPENSE ELIGIBILITY

The following section highlights a non-exhaustive list of common eligible and ineligible expenses on a BCCA. **Exceptions and limitations may occur.**

ALL EXPENSE INCURRED ON A BCCA MUST BE RESEARCH RELATED

EXAMPLES OF COMMON ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

- Student/Research personnel support
- Equipment
- Travel cost related to research
- Research dissemination cost
- Meeting or meal event cost related to research collaboration
- Materials and supplies not regularly provided by Concordia University
- Travel and hospitality costs for research personnel, visitors, and students
- Compliance fee and work visa for inbound students, PDFS or academic visitors

EXAMPLES OF EXCEPTIONAL RESEARCH RELATED EXPENSES

- Office/lab phone (voicemail) internal charges
- Specialized computing equipment and non-standard computer software ¹
- Rental fees of off-campus physical space (i.e. studio space) if physical space is not available at Concordia University

¹ Software acquisition must be done with an electronic requisition and may not be bought using a Corporate or Purchasing Card, or any personal funds including credit card (which will not be reimbursed via an Expense Report)

<https://www.concordia.ca/it/services/software-licensing.html>

- Reasonable gifts² (not including meals) to participants or research partners/contributors (not part of the research team)
- Networking expenses ³ related to current or future research grant applications/proposals, and networking expenses related to relationship building and hosting events of academic visitors and collaborators
- Internet charges related to research activities ⁴
- Cell phone monthly plan and device fees related to research activities ⁴
 - Up to 50% if used partially for contact/communication with research team or to carry out research.
 - Up to 100% if used solely for research reasons (e.g., data collection, testing, personal safety reasons, etc.)
- Installation costs for field or external artistic activity
- Patent costs⁵
- Professional membership fees and training related to the research activities for members of the research team
- Expenses related to dissertation/thesis defense
- Medical insurance, vaccines/medications, passports, other immigration costs relating to fieldwork (including compliance fee and work visa) for inbound students, PDFS or Academic Visitors

EXAMPLES OF NON-ELIGIBLE EXPENSES:

- Personal expenses including the proportion of an eligible expense from which a personal benefit is derived ⁶
- Alcohol*
 - * In exceptional cases, alcohol is eligible if prior approval is obtained by the faculty Associate Dean of Research and that the amount does not exceed 10% of the total event or meal cost. Any amount over the 10% threshold requires prior approval from the department and will be charged to the department's operating fund.

² A justification for the gift and its relation to the research activities must be attached as supporting backup when submitting an expense report.

³ A justification for networking expenses and its relation to the research activities must be attached as supporting backup when submitting and expense report.

⁴ A justification for internet charges/cell phone monthly plan and device fees and its relation to the research must be attached as supporting backup when submitting and expense report.

⁵ Patent Costs are fully eligible expenses on a BCCA. It is the **ONLY** exception to the Personal Benefit Rule. However, as determined by the tax consultants at PwC, the reimbursement of patent costs represent a taxable benefit and will be included on the PI's T4 without tax consequences.

⁶ In circumstances where a part of the eligible expense produces a personal benefit, only the proportion relating to the research activity will be eligible on a BCCA.

- Standard computer software centralized by Concordia University through site license agreements
- Salary to the BCCA account holder or any Concordia faculty member
- Honoraria and consulting fees to the BCCA account holder or any Concordia faculty member

ASSOCIATE DEAN OF RESEARCH (ADR) APPROVAL

The nature of the BCCA guide allows for greater flexibility in the determination of eligible expenses. In certain circumstances when expense eligibility is unclear, Research Compliance may request an attestation approved by the ADR explaining how the expense adheres to the essence of a BCCA account.

Please contact researchcompliance@concordia.ca for any questions or uncertainties relating to BCCA expense eligibility.

OTHER RESTRICTIONS:

All expenses charged to a BCCA must also adhere to Concordia University policies.

<https://www.concordia.ca/about/policies/sector.html>

Any unspent amount remaining upon termination of a BCCA account shall be distributed as follows:

100% of remaining funds will be returned to the original funding source. These returned funds will be redistributed with consideration of the core principle of a BCCA account; to support research and research creation activities.