

Wintec Research Development and Transfer (RDT) Voucher Scheme

- Scoping Paper

What is the Wintec RDT Voucher Scheme?

The Wintec RDT Voucher Scheme is an initiative that will

1. Source practical research requests from Wintec stakeholders in local industry/communities
2. Focus Wintec research towards the needs of those stakeholders
3. Develop knowledge based on research outcomes
4. Increase the transfer of those outcomes & knowledge to industry

It is a voucher-based scheme where the Wintec RDT vouchers are issued to a number of organisations/businesses that have suggested research topics. The vouchers are 'research credits' that can be used to engage Wintec to conduct applied research up to a certain value.

The scheme is mainly intended to benefit small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), although research topics with a benefit to wider industry may also be selected from larger organisations.

How does it work?

The scheme will encourage industry to suggest topics for research projects to be conducted by Wintec. Wintec's RDT Vouchers will then be allocated to approved organisations/businesses/groups, particularly where their need for research is matched by Wintec's research capabilities and the purpose of the research fits with Wintec's strategic direction.

The vouchers will carry a value or credit for a certain dollar amount of research, which Wintec will conduct under the auspices of the Wintec Research Office. We intend that the Wintec RDT vouchers will encourage:

- more industry-relevant and locally focused research by Wintec
- development of research findings into recommendations for improving industry practice
- transfer of the resulting knowledge to industry in order to impact positively on real practices

The attached chart demonstrates the RDT process (Appendix 1).

How do we know that the RDT Vouchers are a good idea?

The wider RDT scheme has benefits for Wintec internally, meeting our organisational desire for higher accountability for research funding & research outputs.

Requests for feedback on the RDT Voucher scheme have produced positive responses from a number of stakeholders. In particular, Wintec Employer Partnership Groups (EPGs) have welcomed the initiative, indicating that industry appreciates the effort from Wintec to focus research on applied topics with practical benefit. Through several key Wintec EPGs, stakeholders have already suggested topics for research.

Voucher schemes have been used extensively by enterprise and innovation agencies, usually aligned to a local authority, in Europe, the United Kingdom, and Canada. The purpose of the vouchers is to stimulate the interaction between SMEs and public research organizations.¹ The schemes enable small companies to explore a business opportunity or problem in conjunction with an educational institution. The schemes have multiplied across Europe and the UK and demonstrate increased interaction between business and educational institutions. A typical comment made by Ireland's Innovation Voucher Program Manager is "The feedback from Innovation Voucher holders has been very positive to date, with most participating companies citing the "lack of red tape" as one of the main reasons they would use the initiative again".² Likewise in the Northwest of England the

¹ <http://www.dime-eu.org/working-papers/wp13/innovation-vouchers>

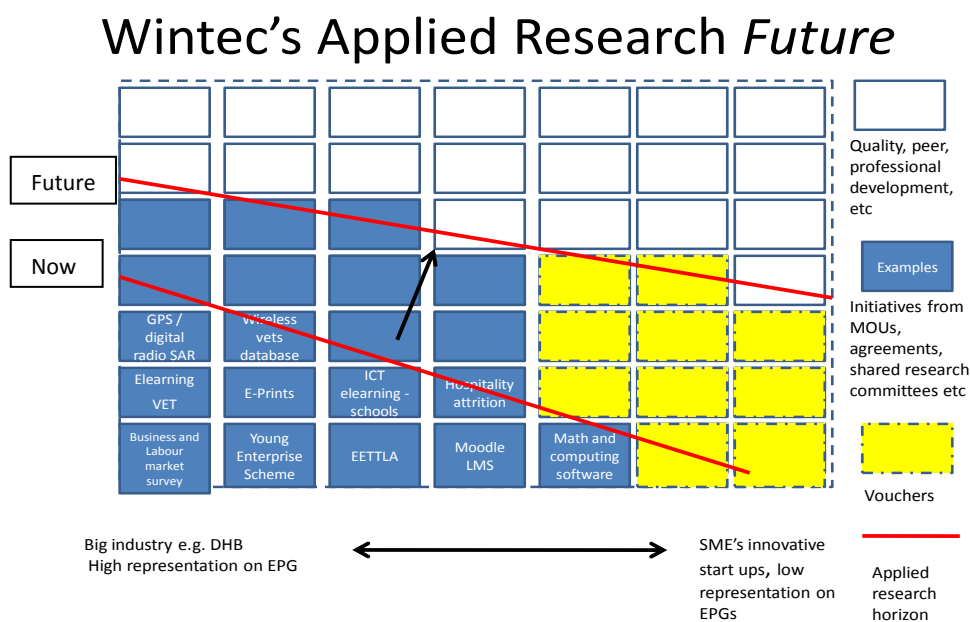
² <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/u2b/issue7/pdfs/U2B%20Summer%2009%20page%205.pdf>

innovation voucher scheme has proved to be a huge success, engaging SMEs with the region’s reliable knowledge base to improve their competitiveness and productivity.³

In Ireland the scheme is promoted to business as “The Innovation Voucher allows you to concentrate on running your business while knowledge providers come up with a solution that could take your business to the next level.”⁴

In addition to the web sites referenced above examples of how vouchers have been used are available at: <http://www.nwdabusinessfinance.co.uk/innovation-vouchers/how-vouchers-are-used>

The vouchers will be used to stimulate interaction particularly from SMEs as has proved successful in other countries. The intention is to increase the interaction between Wintec researchers and business through the vouchers and through other business engagement initiatives that Wintec is undertaking with industry groups already in place. This can be demonstrated as Wintec’s Applied Research *Future*.



How will it be promoted?

The scheme will be promoted via an RDT promotional plan that will include:

- Direct marketing to Wintec EPGs and associated ITOs
- Promotion through Waikato business support organisations such as Opportunity Hamilton, Waikato Chamber of Commerce, NZTE, Sustainable Business Network
- RDT Voucher System web page on the Wintec public website
- Media publicity generated by Wintec Communications Office

As format allows, the above promotional channels will combine in a strategy to explain what the RDT voucher system is, how it works, what the relevant deadline dates are, and how to submit an application for research.

Businesses and organisations will be asked to fill out a research request form downloaded from the Wintec website. This form will be submitted via email direct to the Wintec Research office.

The information on the form will include company details, the knowledge question, expectation of added value, company overview and the type of help required, the task and the type of expertise

³ <http://www.nwda.co.uk/news--events/press-releases/200901/innovation-vouchers-hit-500.aspx>

⁴ <http://www.innovationvouchers.ie/>

required, expected benefits and expected outputs. There will be some information for fairness needed on companies' engagement with knowledge providers and other public funding initiatives.

Funding - Where will the money come from?

Wintec will fund the initial pilot from research funds held by the Wintec Research Office.

How much money is available?

We expect to use a total of \$20,000 for the pilots. On an ongoing basis, significant research capability is available within Wintec schools. Similar overseas schemes demonstrate that after the voucher scheme is established among industry, particular research projects can be jointly funded with additional contributions from industry.

How much will each voucher be worth?

Vouchers will be printed in denominations that will allow flexibility in the amount awarded to various projects. For approved research projects, this will probably mean that several vouchers will be awarded to make up the value of the research.

What will the vouchers be used for?

Vouchers will be used to purchase research from Wintec that

- Solves a problem for industry
- Innovates products/processes, increasing capability and/or capacity
- Results in transfer of knowledge from researchers to industry
- Generates ongoing benefits to industry

Support will take the form of a demand-led research project around a well defined knowledge question, such as: *(needs tailoring to our expertise)*

- New product / process development
- New or improved production process
- New service development
- New service delivery and customer interface
- Preliminary research / Literature research
- New business model development
- Innovation or Technology audit
- Experimental Testing / Measuring
- Supply chain management and logistics
- Efficiency audit, process change
- *Exploiting new web technologies for the region and/or industry*

The business and Wintec will describe the "added value" that the solution to the knowledge question will bring to the business e.g.

- Improvement in product quality
- Reduction in company costs
- Enhanced ability to carry out innovative projects
- Stronger links with researchers
- Productivity gains
- Creation of an "innovation" culture in the business

What will the vouchers not be able to be used for?

To ensure alignment with Wintec's degree course requirements, we expect that approved projects will meet applied research criteria, ie. work that develops or tests existing knowledge and is primarily directed towards either specific practical objectives or towards the evaluation of policies or practices. Work which involves the routine application of established techniques on routine problems is unlikely to be approved for voucher funding.

Therefore vouchers may not be used to cover:

- Standard training courses

- Costs associated with any 'business as usual' activities
- Purchase of software
- Internships for students from any educational institution
- Design & production of advertising material
- Sales activities
- To subsidise the cost of, or promote, exports

How will we calculate the cost/value of the research?

Wintec will cost the research on the usual basis of fully absorbed staffing and materials costs.

Who can apply to receive a voucher?

Any business or community organisation that has a topic or issue that would benefit from applied research may apply for vouchers. Applicants will be reminded that their applications will stand the best chance of success if they match with the selection criteria.

Groups of applicants may form a joint application on a single topic. If the research process in this case will result in a wider scale transfer of knowledge/benefit from research into industry, then this may increase the chances of selection to receive vouchers.

It is envisaged that two pilot projects will be carried out in conjunction with existing EPG members to trial the RDT process, before the voucher system is rolled out to local SMEs.

What is the application process?

Application forms will be available on the RDT Voucher System webpage, accessible from the Wintec public website. Also on that page will be deadlines for submitting applications to be considered in the current round of funding, and indications of dates when they will be notified if they have been successful or not.

- Wintec will announce & advertise the start of the application process.
- Applicants will fill out the application form outlining the problem to be solved and submit via email to the Wintec Research Office.
- An acknowledgement of receipt will be sent to the applicant.
- Wintec faculty acknowledges that Wintec has the expertise to research & solve the problem.
- Wintec Research Office in conjunction with BDU may wish to discuss aspects further with applicants to enable modifications to the problem/research question prior to submitting their applications.
- Wintec's Central Research Approval Group (CRAG) considers applications and selects which ones will receive vouchers.
- Both successful & unsuccessful applicants are notified in writing. They will be sent details on how to proceed as this point, or advice on further options for re-applying or applying for alternate research sources.
- Wintec Research Office liaises with applicants and researchers to arrange for research to be carried out.

How will the applications be collected?

Applications will be received via the online application form to the Wintec Research Office (sample form attached).

Who will assess the applications?

Applications will be processed through the existing system of research proposal processing – Research Office to receive and administer applications, CRAG to consider & approve. During the selection process, Wintec research leaders and Heads of School will participate by describing the research capabilities and capacity that are available to apply to industry suggestions.

How will the mix of research be decided/How will projects be chosen?

Selection criteria will be developed by a consultative process that will include EPG members, Wintec Director of Research, Heads of School, research leaders and Business Development. In the event that valid applications exceed the numbers of vouchers available, a lottery approach may be used to determine successful applications.

As the RDT Voucher Scheme is intended to benefit SMEs, applications from entities with 19 or fewer employees will be favoured.

How will the successful applicants be notified & what expectations will they be given at that time?

Correspondence to successful applicants will contain the following information:

1. Notification of successful application
2. \$ amount awarded
3. When to expect voucher/s
4. Expiry date of voucher/s
5. Who to contact at Wintec for enquiries, and when
6. Approx estimate of timelines (if possible) for execution & completion of research?
7. Description of what will happen to research outcomes/results/recommendations, how they will be delivered back to the client, what the IP rights will be, what costs will be involved
8. Comments on whether additional remuneration to researchers may/may not be appropriate
9. Comment on Wintec's rights to publish results

How will the unsuccessful applicants be notified and what expectations/feedback will they be given at that time?

Unsuccessful applicants will receive written notification of their unsuccessful application, including

1. Comment/s as to why their application was not approved
2. Notification that their research topic will be recorded/retained for consideration in future funding rounds, and in other Wintec research funding processes
3. An invitation to submit again in future
4. Brief advice for preparing future applications if any
5. Ideas for alternative avenues of research funding, either within or outside Wintec, or
6. Direction on ways to restructure the research problem to allow approval, if possible (eg. Break the research down into smaller projects over a longer time period)

How will the research be managed?

By Research Office through normal/existing mechanisms. Contact and progress reports will be made at agreed intervals and the findings produced & recommendations made finishing with conclusion/handover to industry sponsor.

Who will own the IP in the results?

1. The client/voucher holder, in most cases, will be the intellectual property owner of the research outputs, with the exception of publishing rights (noted below). Therefore the client will have the right to use/apply the information in the course of their normal activities.
2. Wintec will retain the rights to publish the research results, and may make these results available for purchase by interested parties.
3. In the event that the client wishes Wintec to not publish the research outputs (eg. For protection of competitive advantage), both parties may negotiate a variation on this arrangement.
4. Wintec reserves the right to negotiate sharing of IP rights, to propose specific IP arrangements for specified projects and to change Voucher policy in future funding rounds.

The IP agreement should be discussed and recorded at the outset so that all parties proceed with full understanding of the agreement regarding intellectual property.

Production of logos, vouchers, webpage

- Graphic design services by Ramp Press/Curriculum Factory (to be determined)

- Web design by Media Arts Students/Verdict/Ramp Press/Curriculum Factory (to be determined)
- Printing by Zoom

PR plan & execution

Director of Communications in conjunction with Business Development Manager

Appendices

Voucher System Flowchart

Application Form

Voucher System Flow Chart

