

EARLY CAREER AWARD (ECA)

(Revised 26 November 2025)

In order to encourage new researchers in mathematics education, MERGA sponsors an award to an author in the early part of their career. The award, for excellence in writing up and presenting a piece of mathematics education research, consists of a plaque and a prize of \$500 and is presented at the annual conference.

Entry for the ECA is by submission of a written paper for presentation at the conference through the Early Bird process. All of the general requirements for regular research papers that have been set out by the editorial committee of the conference proceedings need to be observed. Intending applicants must indicate their entry in the ECA by indicating their nomination on the Early Bird submission form.

ECA eligibility criteria, information about the judging process, and the judging criteria are included below. Please note that when applying to be considered for the ECA, the applicant will be required to acknowledge that they satisfy the eligibility criteria.

ELIGIBILITY

1. As the ECA is designed to encourage new entrants to mathematics education research, to be eligible, applicants must:
 - a. be undertaking a Higher Degree by Research OR be no more than 5 years* post awarding of a Higher Degree by Research;
 - b. have previously published no more than three sole or lead authored research publications (not including conference papers); and
 - c. have not previously won the ECA.
2. An applicant for the ECA **MUST** be registered for the MERGA conference.
3. Only single authored papers are eligible for entry into the ECA.
4. All papers entered into the ECA must proceed through the Early Bird review process.

The decision of the VP(Research) concerning eligibility will be final.

* as per ARC Guidelines allowing for career interruptions – for queries contact VP Research

JUDGING THE ECA

There are TWO elements to the judging of the ECA:

- the quality of the written paper, and
 - the quality of the presentation at the conference.
1. The reviewing of ECA applicants' papers **MUST** commence with submission through the Early Bird process.
 2. Only regular research papers that have been reviewed and accepted for presentation at the conference and for publication in the Proceedings will be considered eligible for the second and final stage of the ECA judging.
 3. Final judging will be by a panel of senior researchers in attendance at the conference. The panel will, as far as is practical, reflect a range of mathematics education research interests, research methodologies and paradigms, theoretical frameworks, and concerns with education practice. At least one member of the judging panel will attend and observe the paper presentation of each ECA applicant eligible for the final stage of ECA judging. If a shortlist has been made, judges will attend only the presentations of shortlisted applicants.

4. When coming to a final decision, the judges will take both the published paper and the presentation into account. The published paper will normally carry more weight than the presentation.
5. The criteria for the written papers and the conference presentation are as follows.

Criteria for the written papers

- Does the paper address a clearly articulated research question/issue?
- Is this question/issue significant to mathematics education (teaching practice, policy, research, theory)?
- Is there a potential for contribution to advancement of the field of mathematics education?
- Are theories informing the work explicitly recognised and critically discussed?
- Where the paper is based on empirical research, are the data collecting methodologies clear and appropriately chosen?
- Where the paper is directly based on empirical research, is data proficiently analysed and discussed in relation to the relevant scholarly literature?
- Where the paper engages a theoretical discussion or canvasses alternative perspectives relating to teaching practice, policy or theory, are concepts proficiently analysed and discussed in relation to the scholarly literature and does a distinctive, conceptually coherent view, emerge?
- Does the paper have conclusions appropriate to its treatment of themes and/or research findings and discussion?
- Does the paper exhibit coherence, readability and clarity of expression, accuracy, well-chosen grammar, standard spelling, and an academic style of presentation?

Criteria for paper presentations

Does the presentation:

- fit within the time available?
- present a clear exposition of the written paper?
- demonstrate a grasp of the topic?
- encourage the interest and thoughtful engagement of delegates in the content and topic of the presentation?
- promote communication by using presentation technologies in a thoughtful and creative way?
- provide good illustrations and respond helpfully to questions?

The judging panel notifies the VP(Research) of the winning entrant.

The VP(Research)'s decision whether or not to award the ECA will be final.

Shortlisting: Depending on the number of entries accepted for presentation and publication, in order to facilitate judging for the award a shortlist may be prepared by the VP(Research) for the final stage of judging. If a shortlist needs to be prepared, the criteria for judging the written paper will be used.

Please direct further inquiries to the VP(Research) at vp.research@merga.net.au.