ARC Discovery Grants Workshop

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FedUni

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Points covered here

- Brief introduction/overview

- Discovery and DECRA programs

- ARC Grantsmanship:
  - the ARC’s assessment process,
  - elements of a successful application
FedUni’s ARC DP20 and DECRA 20 process of EOI's, reviews etc is pretty much useless if you in the top 1 or 2% of university research academics.

The purpose of this session and tomorrow’s sessions with Emeritus Prof. Peter Baverstock, and indeed the whole process, is to provide a solid understanding of how to be successful in this highly competitive arena so that your application will have a winning ‘edge’.

If your application is deemed to be only superior than ~80% of the other applications submitted, then your application will not be funded!
2017–18 Federal investment in R&D
(Approx. AU$10 Billion)

Portfolio:
- Ag & Water Res
- A-G’s
- Comms & Arts
- Defence
- Edu & Training
- Enviro & Energy
- Foreign Affairs & Trade
- Health
- Industry, Innov & Sci
- Inf & Region Dev
- PM & C
- Social Services
- Treasury
- Vets’ Affairs

- R&D Tax Incentives $3.14bn (30.5%)
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) $0.01bn (0.05%)
- ARC – NCGP $0.76bn (7.37%)
- Meats Research $0.09bn (0.87%)
- Higher Ed Res Promotion (HERP) $0.00bn (0.05%)
- Natl Inst Prog - ANU $0.22bn (2.13%)
- Research Support Program $0.92bn (8.98%)
- Research Training Program $1.02bn (9.91%)
- Aust Cent for Internat… $0.11bn (1.03%)
- NIHMRN $0.84bn (8.18%)
- ARENA $0.26bn (2.53%)
National Competitive Grants Program

Discovery Program
- Australian Laureate Fellowships
- Future Fellowships
- DECRA

Linkage Program
- Centres of Excellence
- SRIs
- ITRP
- LIEF

Discovery Projects
- LASP
- Linkage Projects

Area of box represents ARC funding by scheme (new and ongoing projects) for 2017
Discovery Program

The ARC’s Discovery funding schemes recognise the importance of fundamental research to the national innovation system.

Schemes:

- Discovery Projects
- Discovery Indigenous
- Discovery Early Career Researcher Award
- Future Fellowships
- Australian Laureate Fellowships
Discovery Projects

The *Discovery Projects* scheme provides funding for research projects that can be undertaken by individual researchers or research teams.

The **objectives** of the *Discovery Projects* scheme are to:

- support **excellent basic and applied research** by individuals and teams
- encourage **high-quality research and research training**
- enhance **international collaboration in research**
- expand Australia’s knowledge base and research capability
- enhance the scale and focus of research in the Science and Research Priorities.
Return rate is the fraction of funds allocated to a successful grant to the amount requested.
Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA)

- The DECRA scheme provides more focused support for early career researchers in both teaching and research, and research-only positions.
- Researchers may be eligible to apply if they have been awarded a PhD within five years, or longer if combined with periods of significant career interruption).
- Up to 200 three-year DECRAs may be awarded each year providing a researcher with up to $140,858 per annum.
  - This is composed of $100,858 in salary and on-costs, and up to $40,000 in project costs.
DECRA commitments

- The DECRA Recipient is expected to spend a minimum of 20 per cent of her/his time on activities at the Administering Organisation, and 80 per cent of her/his time on research activities related to the proposed DECRA. (D6.4 and D6.5)

- The DECRA Recipient may not engage in other professional employment for the duration of the DECRA without prior approval from the ARC under subsection D6.7 of the Funding Rules.

- The DECRA Recipient may spend up to 0.2 (20 per cent of Full Time Equivalent) of her/his time annually on teaching activities. The DECRA will not be extended to accommodate any periods of teaching. Supervision of honours or postgraduate students is not included in this limit. (D8.2.8)
Average Age of Lead CI in Discovery Projects, DECRA and Future Fellowships 2009–2018
Participation and success rate of DECRA 2018 candidates by gender and career age*


* Career age is calculated as years since PhD.
First-time awardees by scheme 2009–18

- 2008: 33% # DP first-time, 27% # DECRA first-time
- 2009: 31% # DP first-time, 29% # DECRA first-time
- 2010: 29% # DP first-time, 31% # DECRA first-time
- 2011: 30% # DP first-time, 30% # DECRA first-time
- 2012: 32% # DP first-time, 28% # DECRA first-time
- 2013: 27% # DP first-time, 29% # DECRA first-time
- 2014: 29% # DP first-time, 28% # DECRA first-time
- 2015: 28% # DP first-time, 29% # DECRA first-time
- 2016: 27% # DP first-time, 28% # DECRA first-time
- 2017: 27% # DP first-time, 28% # DECRA first-time
- 2018: 29% # DP first-time, 29% # DECRA first-time
The ARC Assessment Process
Application sent to Research Services by due date

Application submitted to ARC by Office of Research via RMS system

ARC ED assigns to 2 College of Expert (COE) members ‘internal assessors’
College of Experts Panels

195 members of the ARC College of Experts at present.

Panels are usually compiled for DP selection rounds for:

- Biological Sciences and Biotech
- Engineering, Maths and Informatics
- Humanities and Creative Arts
- Physics, Chemistry, and Earth Sciences,
- Social, Behavioural, and Economic Sciences
THE ARC ASSESSMENT PROCESS

• The panel an application is sent to is largely determined by the FoR codes of application. (i.e. you largely determine WHICH College of Experts Panel assesses your application (this can be critical!))
Application sent to Research Services by due date

First internal assessor selects and sends application to 4 ‘external assessors’ expert in the field based on COE advice; internal assessors assess independently

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THE ARC ASSESSMENT PROCESS

• External assessors are determined by FoR codes, Key Words, and any other words especially those contained in title and summary sections.

• You can ask ARC to exclude potential External Assessors who might provide unfair assessments.
First internal assessor selects and sends application to 4 'external assessors' expert in the field based on COE advice; internal assessors assess independently.

External assessors' reports sent to applicant and their university.

Application submitted to ARC by Research Services via RMS system.

ARC ED assigns to 2 College of Expert (COE) members 'internal assessors'.

Application sent to Research Services by due date.
• Internal assessors (COE panel members) do initial ranking based primarily upon Track Records, Significance and Innovation, and Research Environment.

• Rank at least 100 applications each!

• Mostly rely on external assessors for methodological soundness to adjust their rankings for the PQI assessment.
You are writing all of the other sections for the two internal assessors who are not likely to be experts in your field and are reading and ranking over 100 applications!

You should be writing PQ&I section mainly for external assessors who are the experts in your field and ranking usually from 1 to 4 applications only.
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Rejoinder submitted to ARC
THE ARC ASSESSMENT PROCESS

• (Hint: make your rejoinder aimed at internal assessors to convince them to moderate their assessment of your application upwards not downwards!)

• Don’t be too defensive or abusive.

• Adopt the *amicus curiae* approach (I am here to assist the internal assessors make a wise decision in their final rankings of my application.)
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Rejoinder submitted to ARC

ARC ED assigns to 2 College of Expert (COE) members ‘internal assessors’

Application submitted to ARC by Research Services via RMS system

ARC internal assessors finalise scores after taking into account external assessor reports and rejoinders

The whole COE panel meets to discuss and finalise ranking of applications and level of funding

Application submitted to ARC by Research Services via RMS system
Ranking process in panels

At least 4 assessments used (always 2 Internal Assessors, always at least 2 External Assessors)

Rankings of A to E for all 4 selection criteria from each assessor (all different weightings to allow dispersal)

Internal Assessors assessments scaled and weighted at 50%.

External Assessors unscaled weighted at 50% regardless of number of external assessments.
Aggregated assessments then ranked.

Bottom-ranked (clearly unfundable) ~70% excluded after due consideration.

Top-ranked (clearly fundable) ~10% agreed to be funded after due consideration.

Ranking process **very** confidential and as objective as possible. COI taken very seriously.
Ranking process in panels

Most of the panels’ time is spent on the remaining (possibly fundable) ranked range 10-30% to ensure the assessments are as ‘correct’ as possible.

Includes detailed ROPE considerations etc.

Each of these applications is assessed individually by whole of panel (Panel members with COI excluded for each application)
No ‘quota’ for any FOR code in any panel… if all best applications received were in the 0402 FoR code then all ARC grants from the PCE panel would go to the 0402 code.

No evident institutional bias!
Ranking process in panels

Budgets adjusted on basis of ranking (higher the ranking generally the better the funding %), and the tension between success rate and overall funding rate.

In the PCE panel at least, it has been MUCH better to ask for a realistic amount. ‘Ambit’ budgets treated harshly in terms of amount granted.
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ARC recommends outcomes to the Minister – Minister approves and releases results

Application submitted to ARC by Research Services via RMS system
HINTS
Know the Funding Rules and Instructions!

HINT!

Set right ‘tone’ to get assessors on-side.. Applications demonstrating EQ as well as IQ tend to do better! (don’t have an approach of: “I am the only person in the world that could undertake this project and if you don’t fund me you are a dill…etc etc”)

Ensure the application is aligned with your track record: “this innovative and significant project builds logically on my demonstrably outstanding research record in this area”
HINT!

Track record is KING! ‘Flavours’ all other assessments. Therefore make the most of yours (**Bolding** your surname in full in C section at every opportunity e.g. (‘Smith….**Sullivan** et al, 2017’ rather than ‘Smith et al, 2017’), identification of your postgrad and PhD co-authors in italics in publication lists, etc etc)

Make explicit why your publications in top 10 are outstanding, significant and especially relevant to this application.
HINT!

ROPE section very important to panels…prolonged illness, child-bearing, time in industry without opportunity to publish, etc. all seriously taken into account.

But don’t make frivolous claims in ROPE or go overboard on your teaching or admin loads!!!
HINT!

• The application must be compelling, an easy read, and backed by a demonstrably outstanding track record.

• Give yourself time...and external input.....Pass it around to trusted colleagues for 'critical' comment etc.

“easy reading = hard writing!”
Myths and misconceptions
Only science gets funded
You can’t get teaching relief
You will never succeed the first time
There is no connection between the Assessor’s Reports and the College of Experts
You can only apply if you have an ARC track record
The College of Experts panels don’t read rejoinders
Don’t bother applying if you’ve had a career interruption
It’s all a lottery