



Australian Government
Australian Research Council

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Discovery Early Career Researcher Award for funding commencing 2023 (DE23)

Version 1.0

Release Date: 4 November 2021

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- As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the Australian Research Council (ARC) understands that it is a challenging time for researchers and research administrators preparing grant applications.
 - The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and responses are designed to provide advice to assist researchers planning applications for ARC National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) Grant Opportunities for the Discovery Program and include FAQs relevant to general effects of COVID-19.
 - While these FAQs relate to addressing some of the general impacts of COVID-19, please also visit the [ARC Grant Calendar](#) for key dates and links to [GrantConnect](#) documentation specific to each new Grant Opportunity. *Please note, while the Grant Guidelines are available to view on GrantConnect, you will need to register with GrantConnect to access all documentation.*
 - All participants should read the Grant Guidelines for the Discovery Program (2021 edition) (grant guidelines) available on [GrantConnect](#).
 - The **Instructions to Applicants** (ITAs), which are available on [GrantConnect](#), also contain important information for Research Office staff and individual participants preparing applications.
 - The ARC does not respond to queries from individual participants. Individual participants should direct all queries regarding ARC funding schemes to their Administering Organisation's Research Office (or equivalent).
 - Please ensure that your application is eligible in accordance with these guidelines, which may differ from funding rules/grant guidelines for previous years.
 - The ARC will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and will update our advice as required. Please visit the [ARC Pre Award Guidance for preparing applications: Responding to the impact of COVID-19](#) page on the ARC website for more information.
 - If further information regarding any of the NCGP schemes is required, the Research Office should contact the ARC at ARC-NCGP@arc.gov.au or 02 6287 6600.
 - Information regarding the Research Management System (RMS) is available at the [ARC website](#), or by contacting ARC-Systems@arc.gov.au for assistance.
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Frequently Asked Questions

1. Timing of Grant Opportunities

1.1 Where are the key dates for upcoming ARC Grant Opportunities advised?

Dates of all upcoming ARC Grant Opportunities are published on the NCGP scheme timelines on the [ARC Grant Calendar](#).

1.2 Will future grant opportunities be delayed, cancelled or extended due to the COVID-19 crisis?

The ARC is continuing to progress NCGP grant application and peer review processes because an important role of the ARC is to ensure we continue to deliver funding outcomes that will support researchers in the recovery period and beyond.

The ARC is not anticipating any changes to the currently published NCGP scheme timelines on the [ARC Grant Calendar](#), as we are aiming to minimise the cumulative impact of COVID-19 on future rounds of funding.

Noting that all Grant Calendar dates published on the ARC website are indicative, should any changes arise the ARC will issue a Network Message to the sector.

2. Application information

2.1 Do I need to include a research contingency plan, with information about potential impacts of COVID-19 on my proposed research, within my application?

Whilst the pandemic is ongoing and continually evolving, the ARC acknowledges that the future impacts of COVID-19 are difficult for anyone to determine. In completing ARC grant applications, the application should be accurate as at the time of submitting the application. Researchers should include a realistic plan of how their research will be undertaken. If applicable, known project specific impacts of COVID-19 can be addressed under the feasibility heading of the Project Description. However, a COVID-19 continuity plan is not required as part of the application. Where an application is successful, applicants will be required to prepare a risk management plan before commencement and any changes in circumstances that affect the proposed research project will be managed as a post award issue.

2.2 Can I include requests for travel both domestically and internationally in my application?

Yes. You can still include requests for travel both domestically and international, in accordance with the requirements set out in the relevant grant guidelines, noting the above advice that researchers should include a realistic plan of how their research will be undertaken. Where an application is successful, any changes to the proposed travel plans due to the impact of COVID-19 will be managed as a post award issue.

2.3 What font size can I use for figures, tables, or pictures in my application to comply with ARC submission requirements?

ARC funding applications must comply with the application format and submission requirements, including the advice in the **Instructions to Applicants** (ITAs).

As clarified within the ITAs, text included in figures, tables or pictures are required to be an equivalent sized font to 12-point Times New Roman. Only references may be in 10-point font.

In judging the equivalence (or otherwise) of text within figures, tables or pictures, it might be useful to keep in mind the intent behind this font size requirement, i.e. to ensure that no application is afforded a material advantage over other applications by inserting substantially more information into their applications through using text that is less than 12-point font. For example, a structural diagram that includes atom labels as part of the image would be acceptable, but images that contain lengthy descriptive text (e.g. paragraphs of small font information) would not comply with the application format and submission requirements in the

2.4 Will including a preprint or comparable resource in any part of my application make me ineligible?

No. The inclusion of preprints will no longer be considered an eligibility issue and applications will not be excluded.

2.5 What is a preprint or comparable resource?

A preprint or comparable resource is defined in the Grant Guidelines as a scholarly output that is uploaded by the authors to a recognised publicly accessible archive, repository, or preprint service (such as, but not limited to, arXiv, bioRxiv, medRxiv, ChemRxiv, Peer J Preprints, Zenodo, GitHub, PsyArXiv and publicly available university or government repositories etc.). This will include a range of materials that have been subjected to varying degrees of peer review from none to light and full review. Ideally, a preprint or comparable resource should have a unique identifier or a DOI (digital object identifier).

Comparable resources refers to non-traditional research outputs that are not readily identified as peer-reviewed research outputs. This includes, but is not limited to, datasets, protocols, software, creative works, and documents sourced from or deposited with government and Academy repositories, such as policy papers, historical and herbarium resources, CSIRO data, *software or other digital assets collections*.

- a. *In the sciences examples may include, but are not limited to the following: arXiv, bioRxiv, medRxiv, ChemRxiv, Peer J Preprints, Zenodo, GitHub, PsyArXiv and publicly available university repositories, EcoEvoRxiv, PaleorXiv, OSF Preprints, PCI Ecology, Dryad, Atlas of Living Australia, TERN AEKOS, GeneBank, Astrophysics Source Code Library (ASCL); CSIRO ASKAP Science Data Archive (CASDA); CSIRO Data Access Portal; data.csiro.au/collections; Academy of Science Decadal Plans.*
- b. *In the Humanities and Social Sciences examples may include, but are not limited to the following resources and databases such as: Linguistics e.g. <https://childes.talkbank.org/>; <https://catalog.ldc.upenn.edu/LDC99T42/>; <https://austalk.edu.au/>; History e.g. https://dataverse.ada.edu.au/dataverse/australian_historical_criminal_justice_data; Archaeology e.g. <https://core.tdar.org/collection/31020/national-archeological-database-nadb>; and “Grey literature”, including cultural heritage reports, and impact assessments housed on the servers of State and Federal government agencies.*

2.6 How do I appropriately cite a preprint in the project description?

If preprints or comparable resources are cited, these should be explicitly identified in the reference list by including [PREPRINT OR COMPARABLE] after the reference. This reference should include DOI, URL or equivalent, version number where available and/or date of access, as applicable. This indication is only required in the reference list and not in the project description itself.

2.7 How many preprints can I include?

The ARC has not placed a limit on the number of preprints or comparable resources that you can include within your grant application. You will need to consider the disciplinary standards of preprint or comparable resource use in your field. Detailed and general assessors will consider the academic merit of your research outputs as part of their holistic assessment including the value, relevance and suitability of any preprint or comparable resources within your application.

2.8 Can I include a preprint or comparable resource in my 10 best research outputs?

Yes, if it is best placed to demonstrate the excellence of your research considering preprint or comparable resource use in your disciplinary area.

2.9 Why is the ARC's definition of preprint so expansive?

In conjunction with an academic reference group, in this instance comprising a cohort of the Australian Laureate Fellows, the definition of preprint was developed to be as inclusive of the different types of research output that could be considered given the wide disciplinary spread of research supported through the National Competitive Grants Program.

3. Career Interruptions

3.1 COVID-19 has affected my academic record. Is this considered a career interruption as part of the Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) – Career Interruptions?

Yes. The Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) assessment criterion allows inclusion and consideration of any career interruption, which has affected a participant's ability to undertake and contribute to research.

Career interruptions arising from COVID-19 can be included under ROPE for consideration by assessors. The **Instructions to Applicants** (ITAs) provide specific advice on how to enter this in the application.

3.2 I was in my last year of eligibility to apply for a DECRA, and COVID-19 has affected my ability to submit an application in 2020. How do I utilise the one-year extension to apply in 2021?

The ARC has implemented measures to support early and mid-career researchers and introduced a one-year, automatic eligibility extension, for all researchers who were in their final year of eligibility for DECRA 2022.

Researchers who were in their final year of eligibility for DECRA and chose **not** to apply for DECRA 2022 can utilise the automatic one-year extension to apply for DECRA 2023.

Note final year of eligibility applicants who applied in DECRA 2022 cannot **apply** again in DECRA 2023. Please see the below table:

Table 1: Eligibility scenarios for applicants who were in their last year of eligibility in 2020*

Was the applicant in their Final Year of Eligibility for DECRA 2022?	Did the applicant apply for a DECRA 2022?	How many times has the applicant submitted applications in this scheme previously?	Is the applicant eligible to apply for DECRA 2023?	Why?
Yes	Yes	N/A	No	The applicant applied in their final year of eligibility in 2020 and therefore cannot also apply in 2021 using the one-year extension
No	Yes	1	Yes	The applicant can apply in this year as they were not in their final year of eligibility in 2020 and they have not previously submitted two applications in

				the DECRA scheme
No	Yes	2	No	The applicant cannot apply in this round as the applicant has already submitted two applications in the DECRA scheme

*Note the following eligibility scenarios are provided to assist potential applicants and their Research Office in determining if the one-year extension can be utilised or not. Please refer to the relevant grant guidelines for detailed information regarding eligibility.

3.3 Will the ARC offer an automatic one-year extension to researchers who are in their final year of eligibility for DECRA in 2021?

The ARC will not be offering an automatic one-year extension in 2021 for applicants in their final year of eligibility for DECRA 2023 in 2021. The one off extension was made available to assist researchers in their final year of eligibility in 2020, and the ARC has now further expanded the categories available regarding significant career interruptions to also include extensions to the eligibility period.

3.4 Can a DECRA 2023 applicant be granted an extension to the eligibility period due to significant career interruption from COVID-19?

Categories for career interruptions that can be selected for the purpose of an eligibility extension have been expanded in the DECRA 2023 application form to include:

- Disaster management and recovery
- Limited or no access to facilities and resources

The **Instructions to Applicants** provide specific advice that if a DECRA candidate has had a significant career interruption, including due to the impact of COVID-19, they will need to seek an extension to the eligibility period through their Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) or equivalent.

3.5 If I have had a significant career interruption, how much information should I include in question F17 of the application form?

All applications submitted to the ARC must be certified by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (DVCR) in the Administering Organisation, and the DVCR does not need to provide any additional certification for this question.

All personal or confidential information relevant to the career interruptions should be excluded in the application form. For example, a medical certificate should not be provided if the interruption was due to a medical condition.

This certification requirement differs to question F11 of the application form, where the DVCR is required to certify each allowable career interruption, to ensure that sufficient evidence has been provided to the Administering Organisation and the eligibility requirements are met in accordance with subsections C3.7 b and C3.10 of the Grant Guidelines for the Discovery Program (2021 edition).

4. Certification

4.1 If I am concurrently applying for funding from the Australian Government (ARC or elsewhere) for similar or linked research, what information should I provide in question C4 of the application form?

Question C4 asks you to briefly explain how funding this project would not duplicate Australian Government funding or overlap with existing projects.

You should briefly explain why you are applying for funding for similar or linked research from the Australian Government and describe how any duplication, overlap or other involvement in applications would be managed if these applications are funded (including any withdrawal of application(s), intention of relinquishing current grants, withdrawal of investigators, or amendment of current project end date).

4.2 Does the certification within RMS replace the ARC written evidence document (certification proforma) on GrantConnect for all named participants and their organisations?

No. The certification in RMS is for the candidate only. The simplified process through RMS includes:

1. participant certification within the RMS application form (question F21)
2. an additional DVCR certification clause in RMS prior to submission (delegate certification).

The Certification Proforma document which was previously available on GrantConnect has been updated so that it can be used by the Administering Organisation to obtain written evidence from other participating organisations. However, the use of the ARC certification proforma is not mandatory. The Administering Organisation may determine the format for written evidence.

5. Logistics support for Antarctic research

5.1 What logistics advice should I seek if my proposed research project included Antarctic research?

If your proposed research project includes Antarctic research that will require logistical support, please contact the [Australian Antarctic Division](#) for advice about available logistical support prior to submitting your application.

6. Assessment of applications

6.1 How will my application be assessed in relation to COVID-19 impacts on the proposed research project?

Assessment of applications will continue in accordance with ARC's [peer review processes](#). ARC assessors will be instructed to assess all applications based on the content of the application only and not make assumptions about the viability of a proposed research project due to the potential impacts of COVID-19. Where an application is successful, applicants will be required to prepare a risk management plan before commencement and any changes in circumstances that affect the proposed research project will be managed as a post award issue.

6.2 Requests Not to Assess process

A Request Not to Assess (RNTA) form is now submitted in RMS as detailed on [GrantConnect](#) and the [ARC website](#).

6.3 What is the maximum character limit for justification for RNTA?

If a request includes the name of a current ARC College of Experts member, as listed on the ARC website, or in RMS at the time of submitting the RNTA form, the request must be accompanied by a justification (the new maximum character count for the justification has been increased to 2500).

7. Budget

7.1 What are the expectations for non-mandated contributions in applications submitted for upcoming Grant Opportunities?

For those schemes where Grant Guidelines do not require minimum co-contributions by participating organisations, the ARC also understands that the level of cash and/or in-kind contributions pledged by Administering Organisations and other Participating Organisations to show support for a proposed research project are likely to be reduced in future applications

due to the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Noting that Administering Organisations still need to take in account the feasibility of the proposed research project if there are reduced contributions.

ARC assessors will be instructed that they should not make assumptions about an Administering Organisation's level of commitment and support of an application solely based on lower levels of pledged additional cash and/or in-kind support than historically provided.