



Australian Government

Australian Research Council

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Discovery Early Career Researcher Award for funding
commencing 2024 (DE24)**

Version 1.0 - Release Date: 14 October 2022

- All participants should read the Grant Guidelines for the Discovery Program (2021 edition) (grant guidelines) available on [GrantConnect](#) and specific *Instructions to Applicants* documents available on Grant Connect as they contain important information for Research Office staff and individual participants preparing applications.
- The Australian Research Council (ARC) does not respond to queries from individual participants. Individual participants should direct all queries regarding ARC grant opportunities to their Administering Organisation's Research Office (or equivalent). If further information regarding the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) is required, the Research Office should contact the NCGP at arc-ncgp@arc.gov.au
- Information regarding the Research Management System ([RMS](#)) is available at the [ARC website](#), or by contacting arc-systems@arc.gov.au for assistance.

This Frequently Asked Questions document will be updated as required.

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 Grants Calendar](#).

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

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 aiming to minimise the cumulative impact of COVID-19 on future rounds of funding.

Noting that all [ARC Grants 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. Applicants are required to declare in the application that potential risks have been taken into consideration for the proposed project, including the 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.

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, a highly legible font type and size must be used before converting to PDF such as: Arial, Helvetica, Palatino and Times New Roman. Variants such as mathematical typesetting languages may also be used.

Ensure that your PDF text is readable both online and in print (it is recommended that 12pt font is used) this includes ensuring readability of text within figures and tables (it is recommended that 10pt font is used). If the application is deemed illegible or unreadable, the application may be made ineligible.

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 Grant Guidelines for the Discovery Program (2021 edition) and the Instructions to Applicants.

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

No. The inclusion of preprints is not 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 pre-print 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 resource 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. The 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 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. **Instructions to Applicants** (ITAs) provide specific advice on how to enter this in the application.

3.2 If I have had a significant career interruption, how much information should I include in question F16 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 interruption/s should not be included in the application form. For example, a medical certificate should not be included if the interruption was due to a medical condition.

This certification requirement differs to Question F10 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).

3.3 If I am the primary carer of a dependent child(ren), can I claim two full years as a career interruption?

For the purposes of eligibility, a primary carer is entitled to claim two-years career interruption for each dependent child regardless of the amount of leave taken. The career interruption must have occurred after the conferral of your PhD or equivalent, irrespective of the child's birth-date.

3.4 My Partner and I share the care of our dependent child. Who is the primary carer?

Care arrangements that are ongoing and regular in their nature would typically identify the primary carer in a family. For the purposes of eligibility, claims of career interruption must be significant, not overlapping and certified by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) or equivalent. The ARC is entitled to seek evidence to support the certification by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) for any application claiming a career interruption.

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 within RMS is for the candidate only. The simplified process through RMS includes:

1. participant certification within the RMS application form (Question F20)
2. an additional DVCR certification clause in RMS prior to submission (delegate certification).

The Certification Proforma template is available on GrantConnect. It can be used by the Administering Organisation to obtain written evidence from other participating organisations. However, the use of the ARC certification pro forma 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 maximum character count for the justification has been increased to 2500).

7. The National Interest Test (NIT)

7.1 What is the NIT statement and how is it assessed?

The NIT statement is a requirement in all ARC application forms for funding within the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP). It was first introduced, following the Minister's

announcement in 2018, for the Discovery Projects round for funding commencing in 2020 and has been included within all subsequent schemes.

The NIT statement is a standalone statement assessed by the ARC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) prior to making recommendations to the Minister. The purpose of the NIT is to demonstrate the societal benefits (economic, commercial, environmental, social and/or cultural) of the proposed research beyond the academic community. The audience of the NIT Page 7 of 8 is the general public, which is a different audience than that of the Application Project Summary, whose audience is the applicant's peers.

The assessment of the NIT is undertaken by the ARC CEO, and is undertaken separately to the peer assessment process. Peer reviewers are not able to view the NIT statement submitted as part of Discovery Early Career Researcher Award applications.

The NIT statements are a critical part of the funding recommendations to the Minister, in addition to the processes that consider due diligence, eligibility, and peer review assessment of applications.

The Minister makes the final funding decision.

7.2 What changes have been made to the NIT?

The NIT question in the application form has been updated to clearly identify the information being sought on how the proposed project will benefit Australia beyond the academic community. These considerations are:

1. What is the project about? Describe the project in 1-2 sentences.
2. What are the expected outcomes of the project? What gap is it addressing?
3. How will the research benefit Australia (economically, socially, environmentally, commercially or culturally)? How might the research be used?
4. What translation and adoption pathway(s) might be used to achieve the outcome? For example, are there conditions that would need to be in place for the outcome to occur? If so, briefly describe them.

You should address these four considerations as a single cohesive statement. You should take particular care in addressing each element concisely, noting the statement must be between 100 to 150 words in length and that it needs to be understood by members of the general public.

Avoid technical explanations or jargon that would not be understood by a member of the public without background in the area. Consider whether the statement is written in plain English. For example, does it use a style that would be suitable for popular publications and media? Are there evidence-based outcomes directly related to the proposed research identified? It may be useful to share the draft NIT statement with others outside the application discipline or sector to ensure the project's benefits are clearly understood.

For further information, including examples of well written NIT statements and examples of extracts from NIT statements that do not meet the ARC requirements, please refer to ['Articulating National Interest in grant applications'](#) on the ARC website.

7.3 Who can I talk to about the NIT?

In the first instance, researchers should talk to their Research Office staff for help preparing their NIT statement. Researchers can also contact communications teams or technology transfer officers to test how the proposed project benefits are best articulated for a wider audience. Research Offices may also contact the ARC if further information about the process requirements if needed by using this email - arc-ncgp@arc.gov.au.

8. Budget

8.1 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 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.

8.2 What salary and stipend figures will appear in the Discovery Early Career Researcher Award 2024 (DE24) application form?

The salary and stipend figures for DE24 have been updated to 2022\$ in RMS and are displayed in the table below.

Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) candidate Salary and Stipend rates 2022\$

Discovery Early Career Researcher Award candidate	\$109,079.00
Higher Degree by Research	\$28,870

The salary and stipend figures will be indexed again once the DECRA grants are awarded so they will be paid at 2022\$ rates.

Updated salary and stipend rates are available on the [ARC website](#).