

Response

ARC consultation paper: ARC Peer Review Processes

Please use this template to submit your response to the Consultation Paper. Add additional pages if required.

If you are completing the response electronically, make selections from multiple choice categories either by highlighting the answer that most closely fits your view, or by double-clicking on the checkbox required and selecting checked under 'default value'. Please type comments into cells provided. Cells will grow to accommodate the length of each response.

Queries about any aspect of the Consultation Paper should be directed to Kathie Dent, Policy Officer, Policy Coordination and Governance.

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Responses should be forwarded to the ARC by mail, email or fax by close of business on **19th October 2009:**

Postal: *Peer Review Processes Consultation Feedback*
Policy Coordination and Governance
Australian Research Council
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Canberra ACT 2601

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Respondent Survey

If you are submitting personal feedback the ARC would appreciate your taking the time to complete the following respondent survey. The extent of your response to each question is completely optional. Information gathered using this survey will enable the ARC to analyse feedback received by type of respondents. Any reporting of respondent information will be aggregated and will not be used to identify individual respondents.

If you are providing feedback on behalf of an organisation please specify the name of the organisation, then proceed to the “Feedback” section of the template (page 6).

Personal Details	
Name (optional)	
Organisation (optional)	Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery
Contact details (optional)	Phone:
	Email:
Are you an Australian citizen or permanent resident?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Please indicate your gender?	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Please indicate your age	<input type="checkbox"/> < 30 years <input type="checkbox"/> 30-39 years <input type="checkbox"/> 40-49 years <input type="checkbox"/> 50-59 years <input type="checkbox"/> 60-69 years <input type="checkbox"/> 70 / + years

Please indicate the number of years since your PhD?	<input type="checkbox"/> 0-5 years <input type="checkbox"/> 6-15 years <input type="checkbox"/> 16-20 years <input type="checkbox"/> 21/+ years <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Please tick or highlight any categories that best describe your current role	<input type="checkbox"/> Researcher – university-based <input type="checkbox"/> Researcher – other publicly funded agency <input type="checkbox"/> Researcher – other <input type="checkbox"/> Deputy vice-chancellor / Pro vice-chancellor <input type="checkbox"/> University research office staff <input type="checkbox"/> ARC grant recipient <input type="checkbox"/> ARC partner investigator <input type="checkbox"/> ARC College of Experts member <input type="checkbox"/> Member of peak body <input type="checkbox"/> Member of business group <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify below)
Which title best describes your academic status?	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate student <input type="checkbox"/> Postdoctoral research associate or fellow <input type="checkbox"/> Assistant Professor <input type="checkbox"/> Associate Professor <input type="checkbox"/> Full Professor <input type="checkbox"/> Professor Emeritus <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify below):

Description of your research (optional)	
Please tick or highlight the category that best describes your field(s) of research	<input type="checkbox"/> Biological sciences and biotechnology <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering and environmental sciences <input type="checkbox"/> Humanities and creative arts <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics, information and communication sciences <input type="checkbox"/> Physics, chemistry and earth sciences <input type="checkbox"/> Social, behavioural and economic sciences
Do you consider your research to be interdisciplinary?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If yes, which disciplines does your research span? (please specify below)

Experience of ARC (optional)

In the past five years, have you been a participant on a proposal submitted to one of ARC's NCGP schemes?

<http://www.arc.gov.au/ncgp/default.htm>

- Yes
 No

If yes, please provide a summary of your participation in the table below:

Scheme	No. proposals	Your role(s) e.g. CI, PI, NC, OI, Fellow

Which category would best describe the success rate of proposals in which you were a participant based on the number of proposals submitted?

- 100-76%
 75-51%
 50-26%
 25-0%

Are you intending to participate on future proposals submitted to the ARC?

- Yes
 No

If yes, please indicate in the table below which scheme(s) your proposals are likely to be submitted to and your role:

Scheme	Your role(s) e.g. CI, PI, NC, OI, Fellow

Are you currently a lead person or participant on any on-going ARC projects?

If yes, please provide a summary of your participation in the table below:

Scheme	No. of on-going ARC projects	Your role(s) e.g. CI, PI, NC, OI, Fellow

Have you ever been involved in ARC's peer review process?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	<p>If yes: Approximately how many proposals do you currently review each year: _____</p> <p>Which roles have you undertaken:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Selection Advisory Committee member <input type="checkbox"/> College of Expert member <input type="checkbox"/> Australia-based reader (Ozreaders) <input type="checkbox"/> International reader (Intreader) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify below):

Experience of other funding agencies (optional)	
Have you ever applied to or received funding from other national or international research funding agencies?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	<p>If yes, which agencies (please specify below):</p>
Have you ever participated in the peer review processes of other research funding agencies?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	<p>If yes, which agencies (please specify below):</p>

Further information	
Would you be willing to discuss your comments in confidence with an ARC staff member?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	<p>Comment:</p>

Feedback

Please use the following tables to provide your feedback in regard to any or all issues outlined in the ARC Peer Review Processes Consultation Paper.

1. The role of assessors

(Issue 3.1, page 5)

Changes to the roles and responsibilities of assessors used in ARC schemes.

i. Do you agree with the proposed changes to the role and composition of assessors used in ARC schemes?

- X Agree
 Partially agree
 Disagree

If you do not “Agree” to the proposed changes, please comment on your reasons for disagreement:

ii. Do you have any alternative suggestions regarding the roles and responsibilities of ARC assessors which would address the aims outlined in Issue 3.1?

The three levels of assessors, peer reviewers, panel reviewers and interdisciplinary leaders and the role of assessment moderation and ranking appear appropriate. Ensuring the number of reviews undertaken by peer reviewers is not unnecessarily burdensome and sufficient information is provided to allow the moderation of assessments. Ten applications can sometimes preclude sufficient time to provide detailed reviews.

2. Payment of assessors

(Issue 3.2, page 8)

Changes to the payment arrangements for assessors.

i. Do you agree with the ARC’s proposal not to pay Level 2 Panel Reviewers under the new structure?

- X Agree
 Partially agree
 Disagree

If you do not “Agree” to the proposal, please comment on your reasons for disagreement:

This appears a satisfactory arrangement and we note that the current process is time-consuming and not undertaken by other bodies such as the NHMRC.

3. Participation of assessors

(Issue 3.3, page 8)

Identification of possible mechanisms for encouraging assessor participation.

i. Do you agree with the changes being considered?

- Agree
 Partially agree
 Disagree

If you do not “Agree” to the proposed changes, please comment on your reasons for disagreement:

ii. Do you have any suggestions for encouraging participation by assessors?

This approach suggested seems reasonable. That is:

- providing administering organisations with an annual listing of the Peer Reviewers from their respective organisations and their performance
- providing feedback to Peer Reviewers about the outcomes of their assessments
- asking Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Research) (or equivalent) to provide nominations for Peer Reviewers and Panel Reviewers.

It is also possible to have a public listing of reviewers, as is undertaken by some journals. This potential of a prestige factor may facilitate participation in assessment.

iii. Do you have any suggestions on ways to improve the assessor recruitment process?

4. Assignment of proposals to assessors – matching expertise

(Issue 3.4, page 9)

Matching Peer Reviewers with research proposals using Field of Research codes at the 6-digit level and other classifiers such as keywords.

i. Do you agree with the process proposed for assigning proposals to Peer Reviewers?

- Agree
 Partially agree
 Disagree

If you do not “Agree” to the proposed process, please comment on your reasons for disagreement:

<p>ii. Do you have any suggestions about how this process might be strengthened?</p>	<p>Allocating proposals to Level 1 Peer Reviewers through the matching of FOR codes at the 6-digit level in conjunction with keywords is appropriate. Information to researchers on the importance of code selection is also important.</p>
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<p>5. Assignment of proposals to assessors – avoiding conflict of interest</p>	
<p>(Issue 3.5, page 9) Assessor Conflicts of Interest can create inequalities in the peer review of proposals.</p>	
<p>i. Do you have any suggestions to improve the ARC’s handling of assessor Conflicts of Interest?</p>	<p>Currently conflicts of interest are well handled and transparent. Classification of levels of conflict of interest may increase the pool of assessors.</p>

<p>6. Selection criteria – clarity and composition</p>	
<p>(Issue 3.6, page 10) The clarity of the selection criteria descriptions, particularly those relating to ‘significance and innovation’ in the <i>Discovery Projects</i> scheme.</p>	
<p>i. Do you have any suggestions to improve the clarity and composition of selection criteria used in ARC schemes?</p>	<p>The discrimination between significance and innovation may assist assessors in scoring. It is important that researchers discriminate between the funding schemes.</p>

<p>7. Selection criteria – assessment of track record</p>	
<p>(Issue 3.7, page 11) Improving the assessment of track record.</p>	
<p>i. Please comment on the proposed replacement of “track record” with “research opportunities and performance evidence”.</p>	<p>The terminology of this section is not as important as how it is interpreted, particularly in practice based disciplines. It is also important to consider the range of achievements beyond traditional metrics of grants and publications and within the context of discipline specific expectations.</p>

8. Selection criteria – weighting of individual criterion

(Issue 3.8, page 12)

The appropriateness under the *Discovery Projects* scheme of the weighting allocated to different selection criteria (that is, investigator versus project).

i. Do you consider the current selection criteria weightings to be appropriate?

X Yes

No

If you selected “No”, what selection criteria weightings do you consider to be more appropriate and why?

This weighting is appropriate and is linked to the likelihood of completion and outcomes. Track records should be considered relative to opportunity.

9. Early-career researchers

(Issue 3.9, page 12)

Encouraging proposals from early-career researchers (ECRs).

i. Do you agree with the possible introduction of an alternative ECR scoring mechanism?

X Agree

Partially agree

Disagree

If you do not “Agree” to the proposed change, please comment on your reasons for disagreement:

ii. Do you have any alternative suggestions?

The proposed model proposing a project vs person category should likely be advantageous for ECRs

10. Career interruptions

(Issue 3.10, page 13)

Encouraging proposals from researchers who have experienced career interruptions.

i. Do you agree with the proposed introduction of a ‘career support fellowship’?

- Agree
 Partially agree
 Disagree

If you do not “Agree” to the proposed change, please comment on your reasons for disagreement:

ii. Do you have any alternative suggestions?

We support a ‘career support fellowship’ into the Discovery Projects scheme aimed specifically at researchers in this category.

11. Assessment of proposals

(Issue 3.11, page 13)

Increasing the level of confidence in the assessments provided.

i. Do you agree with the proposed introduction of an assessor confidence level indicator?

- Agree
 Partially agree
 Disagree

If you do not “Agree” to the proposed change, please comment on your reasons for disagreement:

ii. Do you have any other ideas for improvements the ARC could make to the assessor form?

The introduction of a level of confidence measure seems reasonable and also a way of monitoring perceptions of conflicts of interest.

In addition, providing reviewers with feedback at the end of the year (Once the decisions are announced) and access to the other reviewer comments and scores would be helpful as a way of assessing the scoring systems and capacity building.

12. Ranking of proposals

(Issue 3.12, page 14)

Identification of an alternative mechanism for ranking proposals.

i. Do you agree with the proposed introduction of proposal banding?

- Agree
 Partially agree
 Disagree

If you do not “Agree” to the proposed change, please comment on your reasons for disagreement:

ii. Do you have any suggestions for how an alternative ranking process might be conducted?

Banding would be preferable to scores as discussed in the document.

13. Research proposal budgets

(Issue 3.13, page 14)

- (i) Simplifying proposal budget requests.
(ii) Separation of decisions about budget allocations from decisions about the quality of a proposal.

i. Do you agree with the proposed simplification of proposal budget requests?

- Agree
 Partially agree
 Disagree

If you do not “Agree” to the proposed change, please comment on your reasons for disagreement:

Budgets need to be simplified both from the perspective of the applicant and the reviewer and potentially the model of the NHMRC with pooled costs may be useful.

ii. Do you agree that the ARC should separate responsibilities for assessing the quality of proposals and making budget allocations?

- Agree
 Partially agree
 Disagree

If you do not “Agree” to the proposed change, please comment on your reasons for disagreement:

14. Feedback to applicants

(Issue 3.14, page 15)

- (i) Early notification of those proposals identified as being uncompetitive.
- (ii) Improvements to the feedback provided to unsuccessful applicants.

i. Do you agree with the changes proposed?

- X Agree
 Partially agree
 Disagree

If you do not “Agree” with the proposed changes, please comment on your reasons for disagreement:

ii. What improvements could the ARC make to the feedback provided to unsuccessful applicants?

We support:

- early notification to applicants of proposals assessed as uncompetitive by Panel Review Committees (that is, prior to consideration by the Interdisciplinary Leaders); and/or
- more specific and comprehensive feedback to applicants- even in a generic way.

The process outlined to provide revised structure feedback to applicants at two points in the process is also supported.

15. Restrictions on proposals

(Issue 3.15, page 16)

Restrictions on reapplying under the *Discovery Projects* scheme.

i. Do you agree with the principle of restricting proposals?

- Agree
 Partially agree
 Disagree

If you do not “Agree” with this principle, please comment on your reasons for disagreement:

ii. If you agree with the principle of restricting proposals, do you have any comments on the restriction that has been introduced in the *Discovery Projects* scheme?

Resubmitting grants is part of the capacity for refinement. Potentially a section could be provided for each grant being resubmitted – eg review of methodology; pilot data obtained.

ii. Are there alternative mechanisms the ARC might consider?	
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16. Any other comments	
Do you have any other feedback and/or suggestions, relating to ARC's peer review processes, that you would like to submit to the ARC for consideration?	