

Discovery Program - Fellowships Grant Guidelines Changes

Consultation

The ARC engaged with stakeholders as part of the development of these Guidelines. Stakeholders included researchers, university Research Office Directors and staff, Deputy Vice Chancellors Research and grant assessors. Changes made to the guidelines are based on feedback received.

STREAMLINING

1. Simplification of the Guidelines

- The Discovery Program - Fellowships Guidelines (Guidelines) have been reviewed and updated to reflect the findings of stages 1, 2 and 3 of the ARC's Process Review of the National Competitive Grants Program, recommendations 3, 8 and 9 of *Trusting Australia's Ability: Review of the ARC Act 2001* and the Minister for Education's [Statement of Expectations](#) of 26 August 2022 which emphasised the goal of minimising administrative burden on researchers.
- In consultation with stakeholders the Guidelines have been considerably shortened, reducing redundancy and repetition and supporting more user-friendly, fit-for-purpose guidelines. Changes to the Guidelines align them with the streamlined Linkage Projects 2023 Grant Guidelines and Industry Fellowship Program 2023 Grant Guidelines.
- Alongside streamlining, the Guidelines for Discovery Fellowships—Australian Laureate Fellowships, Australian Future Fellowships and Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA)—have been separated from the Guidelines for the Discovery Projects and Discovery Indigenous schemes. A separate set of Guidelines for Discovery Projects and Discovery Indigenous schemes will be released later in the year.
- Key amendments include:
 - o Removal of references to Discovery Projects and Discovery Indigenous schemes
Guidelines reference: Flowchart, 2.4-2.5, 3.2, 4.3, Appendix A
 - o Removal of detailed contextual information about the overarching Discovery Program and including a reference to the ARC website for further information.
Guidelines reference: 1, 2.1
 - o Removal of specification that DECRA project may be undertaken on a part-time basis from 'Grant amount and grant period' section as this information is included in the grant agreement.
Guidelines reference: 3.2
 - o Simplification of the information about eligibility, including moving table of Eligible Organisations to Appendix B.
Guidelines reference: Appendix B, 4.1-4.11
 - o Simplification of the 'What the grant money can be used for' section to 2 subheadings: 'Eligible grant activities' and 'Ineligible grant activities'.
Guidelines reference: 5.1-5.5
 - o Removal of section '6. The assessment criteria' to streamline, with relevant information to be included in the scheme specific Instructions to Applicants (ITAs) documents.
 - o Simplification of the 'How to apply' section under two subheadings 'Application process' and 'Timing of the grant opportunities', including the addition of a reference to attachments in the scheme specific ITAs which replaces removed 'How to Apply: Attachments to the application' sections in Parts B and C for Future Fellowships and DECRA schemes.
Guidelines reference: 6.1-6.7

- Simplification of 'The grant selection process' section and inclusion of updated National Interest Test information, in line with streamlined Industry Fellowship Program grant guidelines.
- Guidelines reference: 7.1-7.14
- Removal of 'Notification of application outcomes', 'How We monitor Your grant activity' and 'Consultation' sections and inclusion of relevant information in streamlined and expanded 'Successful grant applications' section, including new subheading 'Responsibilities'.
Guidelines reference: 8.1-8.27
- Streamlining of information provided under 'Grant eligibility criteria' for all schemes
Guidelines reference: A3, B3, C3
- Removal of definitions where they are no longer used in the guidelines, or are only used in other definitions
Guidelines reference: Appendix A

ABOUT THE GRANT PROGRAM

2. Australian Laureate Fellowships, Future Fellowships and DECRA Objectives, Intended Outcomes and preferences

- The objectives and intended outcomes have been reworded to reflect the schemes' aims more clearly within the broader Discovery Program. This is to enhance applicants' understanding of which Discovery Program Fellowship scheme might best suit their needs.
- In particular, consultations indicated that stronger alignment between objectives, intended outcomes, assessment criteria and the application forms would be beneficial. Updates to the objectives for each Fellowship scheme were in response to this feedback.
- The objectives for Australian Laureate Fellowships have been amended in order to:
 - emphasise leadership, collaboration, mentorship, supervision and the ability to create an enduring legacy
 - emphasise the building of scale, support for innovative and ground-breaking research that addresses as significant gap or problem
 - emphasise the creation of a cohesive research program, including through clear research questions and an appropriate conceptual framework representing value for money
 - incorporate the previous intended outcomes into the objectives
 - incorporate the previous preference statement into the objectives.

Guidelines reference: A1.7

- The objectives for Future Fellowships have been amended in order to:
 - emphasise the demonstrated capacity for high-quality research, leadership, research training and mentoring
 - emphasise support for excellent and innovative research that addresses a significant problem or gap, has clear research questions and an appropriate conceptual framework representing value for money
 - incorporate the previous intended outcomes into the objectives
 - remove the previous preference for Australian researchers, bringing the Australian Future Fellowships into alignment with Australian Laureate Fellowships and DECRA preferences and objectives.

Guidelines reference: B1.4

- The objectives for DECRA have been amended in order to:
 - emphasise support for outstanding early-career researchers with demonstrated capacity for high-quality research and emerging capability for leadership and supervision

- emphasise support for excellent and innovative research that addresses a significant problem or gap, has clear research questions and an appropriate conceptual framework representing value for money
- incorporate the previous intended outcomes into the objectives.

Guidelines reference: C1.4

ASSESSMENT

3. Assessment Criteria and Weightings

- Following consultation with stakeholders, the Assessment Criteria have been amended to be more fit-for-purpose and to bring each Fellowship scheme into alignment, including in alignment with the updated objectives for each scheme.
- Key amendments include:
 - For Australian Laureate Fellowships: Under 'b. Project quality and innovation', the addition of 'innovation of the research program in the context of recent international advances in research in this area' and 'clarity of the major research questions' as new criteria and the removal of 'novelty/originality and innovation of the proposed research (including any new methods, technologies, theories or ideas that will be developed)' and 'clarity of the hypothesis, theories and research questions'.
Guidelines reference: A4.1b
 - For Australian Future Fellowships: Minor changes to the articulation of Future Fellowship Levels. For Level 1, criterion changed from 'evidence of research training, mentoring and supervision' to 'demonstrated capability for research training, supervision and mentoring'; for Level 2, criterion changed from 'evidence of research training, mentoring and supervision' to 'evidence of established capability and emerging leadership in research training, supervision and mentoring'; for Level 3, criterion changed from 'evidence of excellence in research training, mentoring and supervision' to 'evidence of excellence, experience and achievements in research training, supervision and mentoring'. Changes were made to increase the distinction between the Future Fellowships levels.
Guidelines reference: B5.1a
 - For Australian Future Fellowships and DECRA: Under 'b. Project quality and innovation', the addition of 'innovation of the research in the context of recent international advances in research in this area' and 'clarity of the major research questions' as new criteria and the removal of 'novelty/originality and innovation of the proposed research (including any new methods, technologies, theories or ideas that will be developed)' and 'clarity of the hypothesis, theories and research questions'.
Guidelines reference: B5.1b, C5.1b
 - For Australian Future Fellowships and DECRA: Section outlining requirements 'If the project involves research pertaining to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' moved from section 'd. Feasibility' to 'b. Project quality and innovation'. This brings the placement of the clause into alignment for all schemes.
Guidelines reference: B5.1b, C5.1b
 - DECRA weightings have been adjusted: 'Investigator/capability' is 35% (previously 50%), 'Project quality and innovation' is 35% (previously 25%), 'Feasibility' is 15% (previously 10%). 'Benefit' has remained the same at 15%. Changes were made based on strong sector feedback that a greater emphasis should be placed on the project for the scheme designed for early career researchers as this increases equity, especially for people with diverse career backgrounds.

Guidelines reference: C5.1

ELIGIBILITY

4. Eligible Organisation

- The Eligible Organisations table has been moved to an appendix.

Guidelines reference: Appendix B.

5. Change to DECRA project limits and eligibility

- Clause stating that “At the grant opportunity closing date for DECRA, Discovery Indigenous and Discovery Projects applications, We will count...” removed and clause stating that “Applications for Australian Laureate Fellowships, Future Fellowships, ARC Centres of Excellence or Special Research Initiatives do not need to meet the project limit requirements at the grant opportunity closing date” amended to include the DECRA scheme.
- Clause stating that ‘If a role or Project must be relinquished to meet the limits at the grant opportunity date’ has been removed as it refers to the above removed clause and is no longer relevant. These changes ensure the same cross scheme eligibility limits are consistent for all Fellowships in the guidelines.

Guidelines reference: 4.10

6. Addition of residency and time commitment clauses under ‘Responsibilities’

- Additional information added to Fellow’s responsibilities, ensuring clarity in residency and time commitment requirements for applicants in the Guidelines, to align with clauses already in the Grant Agreement.

Guidelines reference: 8.16

OTHER

7. National Interest Test

- The National Interest Test section has been simplified and the updated wording aligns with the Linkage Projects 2023 Grant Guidelines.

Guidelines reference: Flowchart, 7.6

8. Definitions

- Definition updated to increase clarity:
 - o active project assessment date
 - o ARC Fellowship
 - o Australian Government priority areas
 - o Candidate
 - o Chief Investigator
 - o Eligible Organisation
 - o grant activity
 - o grant commencement date
- Definitions deleted where terms are self-explanatory, are no longer used in the guidelines, are only used in other definitions or are only relevant to the Discovery Indigenous and Discovery Project schemes:
 - o ARC assessor community

- Commonwealth
- Commonwealth Fellowship
- General Assessors
- Grant opportunity opening date
- Key Performance Indicators
- National Manufacturing Priorities
- Officials
- ORCID Identifier
- Other Eligible Organisation
- Other Organisation
- Partner Investigator
- Preprint or comparable resource
- Project assessment date
- Project leader
- Science and Research Priorities
- Technical workshop services

Guidelines reference: Appendix A.