



ARC Discovery Program Consultation Paper Response Pro-forma

The ARC Discovery Program Consultation Paper is available at www.arc.gov.au

Responses to the Consultation Paper should be submitted electronically, using this pro-forma, to the ARC by **COB Wednesday 1 December 2010**.

Email: DiscoveryConsultation@arc.gov.au

If you have any questions about the Consultation Paper, please contact:

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Respondent Survey

Information gathered using this survey will enable the ARC to analyse feedback received by type of respondent. Any reporting of respondent information will be aggregated and will not be used to identify individual respondents. **Completion of the Respondent Survey (pages 1 & 2) is optional.**

Contact Details of Respondent

Title:	Acting Executive Director
Name:	Meg Dixon-Child
Organisation:	Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences
Contact email address:	director@chass.org.au

Is this an individual response or a response on behalf of an institution?

(Please mark with an X in the box to the right of the appropriate option)

Individual response	<input type="checkbox"/>
Institutional response	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If this is an institutional response please proceed to the feedback section.

If this is an individual response please complete the individual respondent information before continuing to the feedback section.

Individual respondent information

(Please mark with an X in the box to the right of the appropriate option)

Age

<30	
31-40	
41-50	
51-60	
61-70	
>70	

Gender

Male	
Female	

Current role

Research-only Academic	
Teaching and Research Academic	
Research Administrator	
Other (please specify below)	

Academic status

Postgraduate Student	
Postdoctoral Research Associate or Fellow	
Assistant/Associate Professor	
Full Professor	
Professor Emeritus	
Other (please specify below)	

Years since the award of PhD or equivalent qualification

0-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-15 years	
16-20 years	
>20 years	
N/A	

Feedback

A new ECR award in the Discovery Program

Issues for specific feedback

1. Is the definition of ‘early-career’ as researchers who have between 0 and 5 years research experience since the award of their PhD (or equivalent research qualification or experience) appropriate?

Response:

The definition of ‘early-career’ as researchers who have between 0-5 years research experience since the award of their PhD is appropriate. It is a positive acknowledgement of the fact that for many professionals, such as teachers, their PhD track often does not begin until after a time of professional practice and hence they can be considerably older than ECRs in some other discipline areas.

Further, the Council welcomes the additional two year period available for those with career interruptions including childbirth and carer responsibilities as a positive step in redressing the gender imbalance identified in the APDF program.

2. Will the proposed new ECR award meet the needs of ECRs?

Response:

The proposed new ECR award has the potential to significantly improve the opportunity for ECRs to develop their research track record within a supported institutional environment. The additional two year period embedded within the definition of an ECR, and the adoption of the Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) in assessing an applicant’s research track record, have the potential to encourage more competitive applications from the HASS sector.

3. How do we maximise international and national mobility in designing this scheme?

Response:

The Council questions whether an emphasis on international and national mobility in this proposed scheme is appropriately identified as an issue in need of addressing. In a number of HASS disciplines, in Education for example, the pressing issue is to increase the numbers of people prepared to take a career pathway into the academy.

Further, encouragement for international and national mobility may limit opportunities for some people who for reasons of family and other responsibilities are not able to be this mobile.

4. Is \$25,000 per annum an appropriate amount for additional project support (noting if more was offered fewer awards could be funded)?

Response:

The Council believes that the aim of the program should be to maximise the number of ECRs trying to access the scheme, and agrees that \$25,000 per annum is an appropriate amount for additional project support. We note, for example, that this amount is roughly equivalent to a \$20,000 Australia Council Visual Arts Board New Work Established Grant.

5. Are the selection criteria appropriate?

Response:

The lack of identified career pathways was an important issue raised in the consultation paper *Meeting Australia's Research Workforce Needs*. The Council tentatively welcomes the emphasis on mentoring and the facilitation of career pathways within the institutional support selection criteria. However, the Council notes that the potential for an appropriate mentor from outside an institution should be recognised within this selection criteria, especially those disciplines associated with professional practice, common within the HASS sector.

The Council also notes that policies relating to research quality and research funding may lead to a reluctance for institutions to support potentially less lucrative teaching/research applicants. The Council suggests that a certain number of fellowships be reserved for teaching/research applicants.

The Council tentatively welcomes the adoption of Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) in assessing an applicant's research track record, but would like further information about how it would work in practice.

6. Should there be limitations on the number of times an applicant may apply?

Response:

No. Given current success rates of APDFs stand at only 17%, it is often the case that applicants worthy of funding can be unsuccessful on more than one occasion. The scheme itself already has limitations embedded within it – the requirement for institutional support, the definition of an ECR, and the allotment of time necessary to prepare a application – all provide natural barriers to applying multiple times.

7. Given that some of the current cohort of potential applicants for ARF/QEII Fellowships may apply to the new ECR award but those seeking a second

ARF/QEII Fellowship will need to apply to the *Future Fellowships* scheme, should the current restriction on ARF/QEIIIs applying for *Future Fellowships* be relaxed?

Response:

Yes.

8. Are the proposed flexible arrangements adequate?

Response:

Issues for general feedback

The ARC also welcomes feedback on any other aspect of proposed new arrangements to support early-career researchers.

Response:

While the Council welcomes the introduction of a new scheme to support early-career researchers, it believes that continued support for ECR-embedded projects is necessary alongside such a scheme. The research experience an ECR can gain within a broader Discovery Project is an important avenue for further research training, establishing a research track-record and career mentoring.

The Council recommends an early review of the scheme to ascertain if it has led to untoward separation of established researchers and ECRs and a loss of diversity of age and experience in research teams within the broader Discovery scheme.

A targeted and simplified *Discovery Projects* scheme

Issues for specific feedback

1. Are the weightings of the selection criteria appropriate?

Response:

2. How might we simplify the application process further?

Response:

3. Are there any issues about eligibility we should address?

Response:

The Council welcomes changes to the application process to allow research based creative-practice proposals to be eligible for funding under the Discovery scheme. This is a significant development in the recognition and funding of practice-led research in the creative arts, further bridging the gap between opportunities for research funding and the demands for research quality in the creative arts disciplines.

4. Is the rejoinder process useful?

Response:

5. Do you have comments on the current eligibility criteria for *Discovery Projects* CIs, in particular, and the provisions for researchers holding 50% appointments at Eligible Organisations?

Response:

6. How might we improve feedback to unsuccessful applicants?

Response:

Some additional feedback is needed particularly for the ‘near misses’, that is, those proposals where the referees’ reports are positive but the proposal fails to be funded. Currently, these applicants have no idea how to improve their proposal to increase their chances of funding in the next instance.

Issues for general feedback

The ARC also welcomes feedback on any other aspect of proposed new arrangements for the *Discovery Projects* scheme.

Response:

The Council notes that Discovery projects will be funded for a maximum of three years under the proposed new arrangements. This will severely impact the efficacy of research required in areas such as Education, which are in need of high quality longitudinal studies. The program needs to make sure that disciplines requiring longer periods of research are not excluded from the scheme.

The Council welcomes the efforts of the Australia Research Council in reforming the Discovery scheme to better provide for Australia’s research needs. While

these efforts are to be applauded, if the Australian Government wishes to realise its stated aim of ensuring Australia's international competitiveness in research excellence, the Council maintains that reform of the scheme must be accompanied by additional funding.

Additional funding should aim to redress three shortcomings. Firstly, additional funding would allow for more projects to be funded, improving the overall success rates of grant applications. Currently, the allotment of time dedicated to preparing Discovery grant applications is significant, and with success rates of only 24 per cent on average, much of this time is not being used in the most productive way.

Secondly, additional funding could also be used to ensure the dissemination of research findings funded under the Discovery scheme. This could be achieved – funding permitting – if the ARC included requirements for dissemination of research outcomes in its grant conditions.

Finally, additional funding could be used to provide for Special Discovery Programs targeted at emerging disciplines such as additional support early in their development within the research sector, such as the Design Studies, Creative Arts and Writing disciplines. The Council proposes that calling for proposals specifically in emerging disciplines would help them expand their research capacity, opportunities for international collaboration, and enhance overall research quality in Australian institutions.