



Australian Government

Australian Research Council

Australian Research Council

Client Service Charter

November 2011



Message from the Chief Executive Officer

The Australian Research Council (ARC) is committed to delivering high-quality services to the organisations and individuals that interact with the agency.

This Charter specifies the standards of service delivery that clients and stakeholders can expect. It also gives guidance for the process clients and stakeholders can take if dissatisfied with the level of service provided.

The Charter will assist clients and stakeholders to access our services and enable ARC staff to maintain strong and valued relationships with our clients and stakeholders.

We welcome feedback on all aspects of our service delivery and we are committed to using such feedback as a means of improving our services.

Professor Margaret Sheil
Chief Executive Officer



<h2>Our mission</h2>	<p>The ARC's mission is to:</p> <p><i>'deliver policy and programs that advance Australian research and innovation globally and benefit the community'.</i></p>
<h2>Our role</h2>	<p>The ARC is a statutory authority within the Australian Government's Innovation, Industry, Science and Research portfolio.</p> <p>The ARC is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP); • the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative; and • providing advice to the Minister on research matters.
<h2>Our clients</h2>	<p>The ARC's primary stakeholders are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Australian Government; • institutions and researchers within the higher education sector; and • various partner organisations. <p>Other stakeholders include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Australian community • peak bodies with an interest in research; • research funding agencies; • publicly funded research agencies; • business and industry groups; and • the media. <p>Note: While individual researchers prepare proposals for submission under the NCGP, our client is the administering organisation (the applicant). Therefore, individual researchers should direct their enquiries to their administering organisation in the first instance.</p>
<h2>Our values and guiding principles</h2>	<p>ARC staff conduct their duties in accordance with the <i>Australian Public Service Values</i> and <i>Code of Conduct</i> (see Attachment A).</p> <p>The ARC is guided by a strong commitment to the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellence in achieving our mission through program and organisational objectives; • Engagement with government, universities, research agencies, business and the wider community nationally and internationally; • Benefit to the community through demonstrated return on investment, informed decision making and efficiency of operations; and • Accountability through adherence to ethical standards, government policy and transparent, efficient and effective processes that make optimal use of resources.
<h2>Scope of this Charter</h2>	<p>This Charter applies to all areas of the ARC.</p>



Our service standards

The Australian Public Service (APS) delivers services fairly, effectively, impartially and courteously to the Australian public and is sensitive to the diversity of the Australian public (extract from the APS values).

The ARC aims to meet the following standards in service delivery.

Communication

In our dealings with you, we will be courteous; treat you fairly and professionally; provide timely advice that is clear, concise, accurate and complete; and keep any confidential information provided to us as in confidence, except where disclosure is required by law.

If you phone us, we will:

- answer phone calls promptly during normal business hours and identify ourselves; and
- aim to resolve your enquiry during the call or if we can't, take your details and arrange for the appropriate person to return your call as soon as possible.

If you write to us, we will:

- for simple requests, aim to respond to you within 10 working days; or
- for more complex inquiries, aim to respond within 20 working days.

If there is a delay in responding, we will inform you of the time needed to provide a response and give you contact details if you have further inquiries.

Administration of the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP)

In delivering services relating to the NCGP, we will:

- make available on our website accurate advice and information about our funding schemes;
- promote equitable access to our schemes and services ;
- act fairly, in accordance with our published guidelines, criteria, regulations or legislation; and
- when reviewing funding schemes and scheme funding rules consult widely and provide reasonable timeframes for consultation with interested parties.

Administration of the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative

In delivering services relating to the ERA initiative, we will:

- make available on our website accurate advice and information about the initiative;
- act fairly, in accordance with our published guidelines; and
- when reviewing ERA policy and processes, consult widely and provide reasonable timeframes for consultation.



Policy advice

When developing policy advice, we will:

- consult with appropriate parties to ensure the views of all stakeholders are properly considered;
- ensure policy decisions are evidence-based;
- provide a reasonable timeframe for comments; and
- provide information about our decision.

Online services

In delivering online services, we will aim to have the ARC's website (www.arc.gov.au) accessible at least 98 percent of the time. There may be times when it is not accessible due to technical upgrades or scheduled maintenance. The ARC will endeavour to keep 'down times' to a minimum.

Privacy

We will respect the confidentiality of your personal information and use it only in accordance with the law. We will give you access to your personal information if you request it.

Your responsibilities

To help us provide you with a quality and timely service we ask that you:

- treat our staff with courtesy and respect;
- provide us with timely, complete and accurate information;
- meet any reciprocal obligations of the service relationship;
- allow adequate time for us to respond to requests; and
- provide feedback on the quality of our services.

Your feedback**On this Charter**

We welcome your feedback on this Charter. We will review this document to ensure it remains relevant and accurate. Feedback can be provided by person, by phone by email or by mail. Appropriate contact details are provided within the 'Contact Us' section of this Charter.

Compliments and suggestions

We also welcome feedback on the quality, timeliness and responsiveness of our services. We would be pleased to know if you are happy with our service or if you have ideas on how we could improve our service to you. You can give us this feedback by:

- contacting an ARC staff member;
- emailing the ARC: info@arc.gov.au (general); ncgp@arc.gov.au (NCGP); and era@arc.gov.au (ERA).
- writing to us.



Complaints

We also accept that things sometimes go wrong and that you may have a complaint about the ARC.

Your complaint may be about the standard of services provided by the ARC and/or the diligence, competency, behaviour or attitude of ARC staff.

Step 1: Please talk to us first – If you have a complaint about our service, you should initially speak with the staff member you have been dealing with to discuss the problem.

Step 2: Contact the Complaints Handling Officer – If the complaint has still not been resolved, submit a General Complaints Form (available on the ARC's website) to the ARC by letter or email (complaints@arc.gov.au) addressing your correspondence to the Complaints Handling Officer. The complaint is now a formal complaint.

We will acknowledge receipt of formal complaints within 10 working days and respond within 30 working days. If this is not possible you will be given an explanation for the delay.

Further information on the ARC complaints handling processes is available on the ARC's website.

Whether or not you lodge a formal complaint with us, you may wish to:

- contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman if you are dissatisfied at any time with our handling of your complaint;
- make a complaint to the Privacy Commission if at any time you consider that we have breached your privacy;
- contact the Australian Information Commissioner if you are dissatisfied with our handling of your Freedom of Information (FOI) request; and/or
- submit an application under the Scheme for Compensation for Detriment caused by Defective Administration if you consider that you have suffered detriment as a result of our administrative procedures or advice.

Contact details for these organisations are provided within the "Other contacts" section of this Charter.

Measuring our performance

Against the Charter

All formal complaints will be notified to the ARC Complaints Handling Officer. As part of our commitment to service improvement, the ARC has established a central register for recording and monitoring progress of formal complaints.

We measure and monitor our performance against our Service Charter by:

- recording and acting on your feedback and complaints about our service;
- regularly reviewing the terms and effectiveness of the Charter; and
- reporting on our client service performance in our Annual report.

The ARC will review its Charter every three years.



What is not covered by this Charter

Freedom of Information

Requests for access to information may be submitted under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act). Further information about FOI requests, including response deadlines specified by the FOI Act, is available on the ARC's website.

Fraud

Members of the public who suspect or have knowledge of fraudulent activity relating to ARC business are encouraged to contact the Complaints Handling Officer via the ARC switchboard on (02) 6287 6600 or via email at complaints@arc.gov.au.

Appeals

Complaints about administrative processes related to assessments of proposals undertaken through the ARC's peer review procedures are dealt with by the ARC under a separate appeals process. Additional information about the ARC's appeals process is available on the ARC's website (www.arc.gov.au).

The Australian Research Integrity Committee (ARIC)

Jointly administered by the ARC and National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), the ARIC provides a review system of institutional processes to respond to allegations of research misconduct. While the ARC and NHMRC provide secretariat support to the ARIC, the ARIC acts as an independent body. Further information about the ARIC is available on the ARC's website.

Other information

Information about the ARC is available on the ARC's website at www.arc.gov.au. The ARC's website provides access to a number of services including guidelines, application forms, contacts, newsletters and annual reports.



Contact us

In person

Our office is located at 11 Lancaster Place, Majura Park, Canberra. The reception (Level 2) is open Monday – Friday from 9am – 5pm.

By phone

You can telephone us during business hours (except public holidays) on 02 6287 6600.

By email

General enquiries about the work of the ARC can be emailed to info@arc.gov.au.

Media enquiries can be emailed to communications@arc.gov.au.

NCGP enquiries can be emailed to ncgp@arc.gov.au.

ERA enquiries can be emailed to era@arc.gov.au.

General complaints about the ARC can be emailed to complaints@arc.gov.au.

By mail

You can write to us at:
GPO Box 2702
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Other contacts

ARIC-ARC Secretariat [IN CONFIDENCE]

GPO Box 2702
Canberra ACT 2601
Telephone: 02 6287 6701
Email: aric@arc.gov.au

Australian Information Commissioner

GPO Box 5218
SYDNEY NSW 2001
Telephone: 1300 363 992
Email: enquiries@oaic.gov.au

The Commonwealth Ombudsman

GPO Box 442
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Telephone: 02 6276 0111
Toll-free: 1300 362 072
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au

Privacy Commissioner

GPO Box 5218
SYDNEY NSW 2001
Telephone: 1300 363 992
Email: privacy@privacy.gov.au

Scheme for Compensation for Detriment caused by Defective Administration

Applications under the Scheme for Compensation for Detriment caused by Defective Administration (the CDDA Scheme) should be made directly to the ARC. Further information about the CDDA Scheme is available on the ARC's website.



ATTACHMENT A

Australian Public Service Values (www.apsc.gov.au/values)

- The APS is apolitical, performing its functions in an impartial and professional manner.
- The APS is a public service in which employment decisions are based on merit.
- The APS provides a workplace that is free from discrimination and recognises and utilises the diversity of the Australian community it serves.
- The APS has the highest ethical standards.
- The APS is openly accountable for its actions, within the framework of ministerial responsibilities to the government, the Parliament and the Australian public.
- The APS is responsive to the government in providing frank, honest, comprehensive, accurate and timely advice and in implementing the Government's policies and programs.
- The APS delivers services fairly, effectively, impartially and courteously to the Australian public and is sensitive to the diversity of the Australian public.
- The APS has leadership of the highest quality.
- The APS establishes workplace relations that value communication, consultation, cooperation and input from employees on matters that affect their workplace.
- The APS provides a fair, flexible, safe and rewarding workplace.
- The APS focuses on achieving results and managing performance.
- The APS promotes equity in employment.
- The APS provides a reasonable opportunity to all eligible members of the community to apply for APS employment.
- The APS is a career-based service to enhance the effectiveness and cohesion of Australia's democratic system of government.
- The APS provides a fair system of review of decisions taken in respect to APS employees.

Australian Public Service Code of Conduct (www.apsc.gov.au/conduct)

- An APS employee must behave honestly and with integrity in the course of APS employment.
- An APS employee must act with care and diligence in the course of APS employment.
- An APS employee, when acting in the course of APS employment, must treat everyone with respect and courtesy, and without harassment.
- An APS employee, when acting in the course of APS employment, must comply with all applicable Australian laws.
- An APS employee must comply with any lawful and reasonable direction given by someone in the employee's Agency who has authority to give the direction.
- An APS employee must maintain appropriate confidentiality about dealings that the employee has with any minister or minister's member of staff.
- An APS employee must disclose, and take reasonable steps to avoid, any conflict of interest (real or apparent) in connection with APS employment.
- An APS employee must use Commonwealth resources in a proper manner.
- An APS employee must not provide false or misleading information in response to a request for information that is made for official purposes in connection with the employee's APS employment.
- An APS employee must not make improper use of:
 - inside information or
 - the employee's duties, status, power or authority in order to gain, or seek to gain, a benefit or advantage for the employee or for any other person.
- An APS employee must at all times behave in a way that upholds the APS Values and the integrity and good reputation of the APS.
- An APS employee on duty overseas must at all times behave in a way that upholds the good reputation of Australia.
- An APS employee must comply with any other conduct requirement that is prescribed by the regulations.

