



Foreword

Research is the foundation on which progressive, informed, productive and civilised societies are built. That is why we need to encourage, nurture and reward research talent wherever we find it.

At the last election, the Government promised to introduce a Future Fellowships scheme for outstanding mid-career researchers. This consultation paper is the first step towards delivering on that promise.

The Future Fellowships scheme will help us grow our research capacity and capabilities. It will help make Australia's research effort more focused, internationally competitive, collaborative and interdisciplinary. It will encourage links between researchers and the world beyond the academy.

Your input is essential if we are to make it a success. By reading and commenting on this consultation paper, you will help us create a better Future Fellowships scheme, which delivers the maximum benefits to the Australian community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Carr". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Senator Kim Carr
Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research



Future Fellowships: Consultation Paper

Introduction

The Australian Government announced the creation of a new scheme, *Future Fellowships*, to promote research in areas of critical national importance by giving world class researchers adequate incentives to keep doing their research in Australia. The aim of *Future Fellowships* is to attract and retain the best and brightest Australian and international mid-career researchers.

At present, the career path for researchers can be uncertain with many highly qualified mid-career researchers required to work overseas to further their careers, due to lack of opportunities in Australia. The *Future Fellowships* scheme addresses this problem and will significantly boost Australia's research and innovation capacity in areas of national importance.

Over a five-year period (2009–2013), *Future Fellowships* will offer four-year Fellowships of up to \$140,000 a year to 1,000 Australian and international top researchers in the middle of their career. In addition, each researcher's administering organisation will receive funding of up to \$50,000 per year to support related infrastructure, equipment, travel and relocation costs.

Future Fellowships will encourage proposals from researchers working in areas of national priority. Preference will be given to those researchers who can demonstrate a capacity to build collaboration across industry, research institutions, or with other disciplines.

Although international experience is important for Australian researchers, it is also important they have the opportunity to return home to continue their work. *Future Fellowships* provides an incentive for overseas-based Australian researchers to return home. *Future Fellowships* will aim to encourage outstanding Australian researchers currently based overseas to return to Australia.

Context

The Australian Government has given the Australian Research Council (ARC) the responsibility of implementing the new *Future Fellowships* scheme.

The ARC is a statutory authority within the Australian Government's Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (IISR) portfolio. Its mission is to *advance Australia's research excellence to be globally competitive and deliver benefits to the community*.

In seeking to achieve its mission, the ARC provides advice to the Government on research matters and manages the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP), a significant component of Australia's investment in research and development.

As part of its commitment to nurturing the creative abilities and skills of Australia's most promising researchers, the NCGP provides:

- support for the highest-quality research leading to the discovery of new ideas and the advancement of knowledge;
- financial assistance towards facilities and equipment that researchers need to be internationally competitive;

- support for the training and skills development of the next generation of researchers; and
- incentives for Australia's most talented researchers to work in partnership with leading researchers throughout the national innovation system and internationally, and to form alliances with Australian industry.

The NCGP comprises two main elements – Discovery and Linkage – under which the ARC funds a range of complementary schemes to support researchers at different stages of their careers, build Australia's research capability, expand and enhance research networks and collaborations, and develop centres of research excellence. The ARC Discovery element funds individual researchers and projects. *Future Fellowships* will be administered as a new scheme under the Discovery element of the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP).

Request for comment

This paper outlines the proposed administrative arrangements for the *Future Fellowships* scheme. The ARC appreciates the valuable role stakeholder feedback plays in developing funding rules and effectively implementing a new scheme. We are seeking comments on the proposed administrative arrangements for the new *Future Fellowships* scheme and would particularly appreciate feedback on the specific issues outlined at the end of this paper.

The ARC may make submissions publicly available except for confidential material provided as part of the submission. Ownership of all intellectual property rights in a submission vests in the submitter. However, in making a submission the author grants to the Commonwealth a permanent, royalty-free, non-exclusive licence to use, adapt and reproduce information contained in the submission for any legitimate Commonwealth purpose.

If you would like your submission or part of it to be confidential please clearly mark any material that is to be treated as confidential or indicate that you do not wish the submission to be made public. Personal information relating to submitters or individuals will be treated as confidential.

Responses should be submitted electronically to the ARC on the proforma available on the ARC's web site (www.arc.gov.au) by **cob Friday 27 June 2008**.

Email: ARC-FutureFellowships@arc.gov.au

If you have any questions about the *Future Fellowships* scheme, please contact:

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Proposed Administrative Arrangements

Time frame

Following the consultation process, the ARC envisages the following key dates will apply to the first round of the *Future Fellowships* scheme:

- *Future Fellowships* funding rules made available in August 2008.
- The closing time for submission of proposals will be in October 2008.
- Announcement of Future Fellowships commencing in 2009 to occur in May 2009.
- *Future Fellowships* to commence in the second half of 2009.

Funding

It is proposed that mid-career researchers will be defined as those who have between 5 and 15 years experience since the award of their PhD (or equivalent research qualification or experience). Any such definition would allow flexibility to extend the post-PhD period to take into account periods during which the researcher had child-rearing and/or carer responsibilities or the equivalent.

It is envisaged that up to 200 new Future Fellowships, will be awarded per year, commencing in 2009 to 2013. Future Fellowships will be offered at two levels to reflect the breadth of experience of Future Fellowship candidates:

Level	Final salary figures yet to be determined but will be approximately.
Step 1	\$95,000 (plus 28% on-costs)
Step 2	\$135,000 (plus 28% on-costs)

In addition, each Future Fellow's administering organisation will receive up to \$50,000 per year to support related infrastructure, equipment, travel and relocation costs associated with the Future Fellow's research project.

Objectives

The following objectives are envisaged for the *Future Fellowships* scheme:

- attract and retain outstanding mid-career researchers;
- build collaboration across industry, research institutions, and disciplines;
- support research in areas of national priority across all disciplines that will result in economic, environmental, social, health or cultural benefits for Australia; and
- strengthen Australia's research capability by supporting innovative, internationally competitive research.

Eligibility

Universities and publicly-funded research institutions will be eligible to submit proposals for *Future Fellowships* funding. A proposed list of eligible organisations is provided at Attachment 1.

The ARC *Future Fellowships* scheme will be open to applications from outstanding mid-career researchers, and will particularly encourage proposals involving Australian researchers currently working overseas.

Future Fellowships will fund researchers conducting all types of research (including pure basic research, strategic basic research and applied research) and particularly in areas of national priority that will deliver significant economic, environmental, social or cultural benefits to Australia, for example renewable energy, manufacturing technologies, the sciences, medical research, education and Indigenous health and wellbeing. Future Fellowship candidates should have a record of high quality research outputs and the capacity to build collaborations across industry, research institutions and/or disciplines.

The ARC *Future Fellowships* scheme will be open to applications from Australian and non-Australian citizens.

Current ARC and NHMRC Fellows, who meet all the eligibility criteria set out in the *Future Fellowships* funding rules, may apply for a Future Fellowship only in the final or penultimate year of their existing fellowship.

The eligibility of Future Fellows to be nominated as participants on proposals in other ARC (and NHMRC) schemes will remain subject to the funding rules and eligibility criteria applicable to those schemes.

It is envisaged that Future Fellowships will be funded on a full time basis for four years but that Future Fellows will be able to convert from full-time to part-time status, or vice versa, for periods of time during the fellowship period, provided that the total fellowship period does not exceed six years.

Future Fellows will be expected to reside predominantly in Australia for the full duration of the Future Fellowship. However, they may, with the approval of the ARC, undertake research in industry or at a research organisation (in Australia or overseas), providing that the administering organisation clearly demonstrates this is in the best interests of the research and its outcomes, and of national benefit to Australia.

Selection criteria

The *Future Fellowships* scheme will endeavour to encourage outstanding Australian researchers currently based overseas to return to Australia.

The *Future Fellowships* funding rules will include selection criteria against which proposals will be assessed.

The proposed *Future Fellowships* selection criteria are:

Investigator (50%)

Consideration will be given to the opportunities the Future Fellowship candidate has had to attain the level of achievement

- evidence of capacity to conduct high quality, innovative research
- record of high quality research outputs
- evidence of international research standing.

Strategic Alignment (20%)

- how well does the proposed research project align with and/or complement the research strengths of the host organisation(s)?
- will the proposed project contribute significantly to the building and sustainability of existing or emerging research strengths of the host organisation(s)?

Collaboration (20%)

- evidence of Future Fellowship candidate's capacity to build collaboration across industry, research institutions, and/or with other disciplines.
- the extent to which the proposed project will build collaboration across industry, research institutions and disciplines.

National Priority (10%)

- will the proposed project contribute significantly to the advancement of knowledge in one or more areas of national priority?

Alignment of *Future Fellowships* proposals with the eligible organisation's research strategy

An eligible organisation must submit all their *Future Fellowships* proposals (applications) together with a single statement outlining the organisation's research strategy to the ARC. The statement should list the current areas of research strength in which it intends to maintain excellence and also any emerging areas of research strength which it is in the process of developing. The statement should also outline the plans for developing the organisation's research staffing profile, making specific reference to each individual *Future Fellowships* proposal being submitted and explaining how each proposal is aligned with existing or emerging research strengths.

If the *Future Fellowships* proposal is from a current employee the statement should explain how a Future Fellowship would enhance his/her opportunities at the organisation. If the *Future Fellowships* proposal is from a non-current or fixed-term employee plans for integration of the fellow into the ongoing activities of the organisation at the end of the fellowship should be outlined. The statement on research strategy should also indicate how the organisation will use the \$50,000 per annum funding to support the research of the proposed Future Fellowship.

Proforma to be used for the statements on the alignment of *Future Fellowships* proposals with the organisation's research strategy will be published on the ARC's web site. The Deputy Vice Chancellor Research of a university or Research Director (or equivalent) of other eligible organisations will be required to sign off on the statement and the *Future Fellowships* proposals.

Application and assessment processes

In addition to the submission of a statement on the alignment of *Future Fellowships* proposals with the organisation's research strategy by the administering organisation, it is envisaged that the *Future Fellowships* scheme will follow the ARC's standard application and assessment processes, including:

- Submission of *Future Fellowships* proposals via an on-line application form, as well as submission of 2 copies of full paper versions of each proposal.

- A Future Fellowship may be hosted and supported by more than one organisation but there must be only one administering organisation which submits the proposal for funding and which will receive and be responsible for the administration of the funding if the project is approved. While the administering organisation must be an eligible organisation, it is envisaged that additional host organisations may be collaborating organisations (where the additional host organisation is an eligible organisation) or partner organisations (where the additional host organisation is not an eligible organisation, e.g. overseas research institutions and private organisations from industry).
- Proposals will be assessed against the selection criteria set out in the *Future Fellowships* funding rules. Assessment will include a Selection Advisory Committee comprising representatives with relevant expertise who are familiar with the operations of the ARC, NHMRC and publicly-funded research institutions.
- *Future Fellowships* proposals will be assessed according to the selection criteria.

On-going Administration

A *Future Fellowships* funding agreement will set out the terms and conditions under which the Commonwealth will provide funding and the administering organisation will be responsible for administration of the funding and the conduct of the fellowship.

Parties involved in funded fellowships must accept the terms of the funding agreement and the administering organisation must sign the funding agreement before the ARC will commence payments.

The *Future Fellowships* funding agreement will cover post-award management, including reporting requirements and financial management. Administering organisations will be required to submit reports to the ARC concerning funded fellowships, in the format and by the due dates detailed in the funding agreement.

Issues for Specific Feedback

1. Should “mid-career” be defined as researchers who have between 5 and 15 years research experience since the award of their PhD (or equivalent research qualification or experience)? Any such definition would need to allow flexibility to extend the post-PhD period to take into account periods during which the researcher had child-rearing and/or carer responsibilities or the equivalent.
2. Should Future Fellowships be available as both part-time and full-time fellowship positions ranging from 0.5 to 1.0 FTE?
3. Should there be a limit on the number of *Future Fellowship* proposals that an administering organisation is allowed to submit, e.g. 30 proposals per administering organisation?

General Feedback

The ARC also welcomes feedback on any other aspect of the proposed administrative arrangements for the new *Future Fellowships* scheme.

Attachment 1: Eligible Organisations

Organisations eligible to submit proposals for *Future Fellowships* funding:

A. Universities

New South Wales

Charles Sturt University
Macquarie University
Southern Cross University
The University of New England
The University of New South Wales
The University of Newcastle
The University of Sydney
University of Technology, Sydney
University of Western Sydney
University of Wollongong

Victoria

Deakin University
La Trobe University
Melbourne College of Divinity
Monash University
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University)
Swinburne University of Technology
The University of Melbourne
University of Ballarat
Victoria University

Queensland

Bond University
Central Queensland University
Griffith University
James Cook University
Queensland University of Technology
The University of Queensland
The University of the Sunshine Coast
University of Southern Queensland

Western Australia

Curtin University of Technology
Edith Cowan University
Murdoch University
The University of Notre Dame Australia
The University of Western Australia

South Australia

Flinders University
The University of Adelaide
University of South Australia

Tasmania

University of Tasmania

Northern Territory

Charles Darwin University
Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

Australian Capital Territory

The Australian National University
University of Canberra

Multi-State

Australian Catholic University

B. Public research organisations

Public research organisations may submit proposals for *Future Fellowships* funding if, in the opinion of the ARC, the organisation provides an appropriate research training environment and is predominantly funded by Commonwealth or State government funding. Examples of such organisations include, but are not limited to, Commonwealth-funded research organisations or State/Territory-funded research organisations such as:

- Australian Antarctic Division (AAD);
- Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS);
- Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS);
- Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO);
- Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO);
- Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO);
- Geoscience Australia (GA).

C. Approved NHMRC Administering institutions

The list of approved NHMRC Administering institutions can be found on the NHMRC's web site: <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au>