Chief Executive Officer’s Foreword

On behalf of the Australian Research Council (ARC), I am pleased to release the ARC Peer Review Processes Consultation Paper.

The peer review processes underpin the ARC’s management of the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP). To deliver quality funding outcomes under the NCGP and maintain the confidence of researchers, it is vitally important that the processes for management of peer review are transparent and conducted in an efficient and effective manner. Therefore, the ARC wishes to undertake a thorough review of its peer review and assessment processes in the context of the current research environment and to ensure that the aforementioned criteria are met with available resources.

As part of this review the ARC will consider a range of issues and potential improvements to the peer review process. I invite researchers and institutions as well as other interested parties to be involved in this review by submitting their feedback in response to this Consultation Paper.

We value this feedback so we can be confident that the recommendations resulting from this review will enhance the quality of the funding decisions made by the ARC ensuring that the ARC continues to achieve its mission to deliver policy and programs that advance Australian research and innovation globally and benefit the community.

I look forward to your contribution to this consultation process.

Professor Margaret Sheil
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Research Council
## Contents

1. **THIS CONSULTATION**  
   1.1 **PURPOSE**  
   1.2 **SUBMITTING COMMENTS**  
   1.3 **THE NEXT STEPS**

2. **BACKGROUND**  
   2.1 **THE AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL**  
   2.2 **CURRENT REVIEW PROCESSES**

3. **ISSUES**  
   3.1 **THE ROLE OF ASSESSORS**  
   3.2 **PAYMENT OF ASSESSORS**  
   3.3 **PARTICIPATION OF ASSESSORS**  
   3.4 **ASSIGNMENT OF PROPOSALS TO ASSESSORS – MATCHING EXPERTISE**  
   3.5 **ASSIGNMENT OF PROPOSALS TO ASSESSORS – AVOIDING CONFLICT OF INTEREST**  
   3.6 **SELECTION CRITERIA – CLARITY AND COMPOSITION**  
   3.7 **SELECTION CRITERIA – ASSESSMENT OF TRACK RECORD**  
   3.8 **SELECTION CRITERIA – WEIGHTING OF INDIVIDUAL CRITERION**  
   3.9 **EARLY-CAREER-RESEARCHERS**  
   3.10 **CAREER INTERRUPTIONS**  
   3.11 **ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS**  
   3.12 **RANKING OF PROPOSALS**  
   3.13 **RESEARCH PROPOSAL BUDGETS**  
   3.14 **FEEDBACK TO APPLICANTS**  
   3.15 **RESTRICTIONS ON PROPOSALS**  
   3.16 **GENERAL COMMENTS**

**APPENDICES**  

- Appendix A: ARC peer review  
- Appendix B: Supporting statistics
1. This consultation

1.1 Purpose

The ARC has identified ‘ensuring peer review processes are best practice’ as a key strategy in helping the ARC to support excellence in research (ARC Strategic Plan 2009–10 to 2011–12).

As input to that strategy in 2009–10, the ARC is undertaking a review of its peer review processes with a view to ensuring that its processes continue to be efficient and effective, remain relevant to the needs of the research sector and above all lead to the right outcomes.

This Consultation Paper seeks your comments on changes proposed to the ARC’s current peer review processes.

1.2 Submitting comments

To assist the ARC in compiling and analysing the views of individuals and groups, respondents are invited to submit their comments using the template provided on the ARC’s website.

The consultation will run for five weeks. Comments should be submitted by mail or email to the address shown on the template by 19th October 2009.

Any queries concerning the consultation process or issues raised in this paper should be directed to:

Kathie Dent  
Policy Officer  
Policy Coordination and Governance Section  
Australian Research Council  
Email: kathie.dent@arc.gov.au  
Ph: (02) 6287 6629

1.3 The next steps

In addition to this consultation the ARC will critically examine existing processes; review the processes used by equivalent overseas research funding agencies; and seek expert input from members of an external reference group convened specifically for this purpose.

Recommendations arising from the review will be finalised in consultation with the ARC Advisory Council. The timing of implementation of any changes to current peer review processes will be subject to the nature and level of feedback received and IT constraints. It will also be responsive to the needs of administering organisations.
2. Background

2.1 The Australian Research Council

The ARC is a statutory authority within the Australian Government’s Innovation, Industry, Science and Research portfolio. The ARC advises the Government on research matters and manages the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP), a significant component of Australia’s investment in research and development. It is also responsible for the Australian research quality and evaluation system – the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative.

Through the NCGP, the ARC supports the highest quality fundamental and applied research and research training through national competition across all disciplines. The NCGP comprises two elements – Discovery, supporting individual researchers and projects, and Linkage, supporting partnerships between academic researchers and industry, government and community organisations as well as the international community.

Through ERA the ARC will assess research quality in universities using a combination of metrics and expert review by committees comprising experienced, internationally-recognised experts. The ERA framework aims to: identify excellence across the full spectrum of research activity; compare Australia’s university research effort against international benchmarks; create incentives to improve the quality of research; and identify emerging research areas and opportunities for further development.

The ARC Chief Executive Officer, Professor Margaret Sheil, is guided on strategic issues, policy matters and matters relating to the evaluation of the quality and outcomes of research and research training by the ARC Advisory Council.

2.2 Current review processes

In order to meet the assessment needs of individual schemes, the ARC uses peer review, expert review or a combination of both to inform decision making relating to scheme funding recommendations.

In the context of assessing research proposals, the ARC defines ‘peer review’ as:

“A specialist assessment of the merit of a research proposal (or group of research proposals) undertaken by a peer. A peer is an independent, internationally recognised researcher who is active in the same (or similar) field of research to that described in the proposal(s).”

and ‘expert review’ as:

“A generalist assessment of the merits of a group of research proposals undertaken by an internationally recognised researcher with broad discipline expertise. Expert review is not necessarily undertaken by researchers active in the same (or similar) field of research as the proposals they are evaluating.”

The ARC’s current peer and expert review processes are described in Appendix A of this document. Supporting statistics are provided in Appendix B.
The ARC’s current review system has been in operation since 2001. During that time, minor amendments to the processes have been made but no formal review has been conducted. In 2009, the ARC’s review processes are under increasing pressure owing to a number of factors:

- The number of proposals received for assessment under the NCGP has increased from around 4400 in 2001 to over 6500 in 2008.
- In addition to its ongoing schemes, the ARC has responsibility for a number of new initiatives, for example, the Future Fellowships and Super Science Fellowships schemes.
- Academics are experiencing increasing workloads, limiting the time available to them to participate in peer review processes.
- Concerns have been raised about the transparency and feedback provided through current processes.
- The nature of research is changing (for example, with an increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary research) and the speed of those changes is also increasing.
3. Issues

Terms

For each issue below we have outlined the current arrangements and the proposed changes or areas where comments are sought. In describing the current arrangements and proposed new arrangements the following terms are commonly used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Proposed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Intreaders</td>
<td>Peer Reviewers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Ozreaders</td>
<td>Panel Reviewers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>College of Experts</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Leaders</td>
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3.1 The role of assessors

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

Questions:
- Do you agree with the changes proposed?
- Do you have any alternative suggestions?

Current arrangements [Appendix A: Reference 1]

Each ARC scheme varies in its use of assessors depending on the objectives of the scheme, the scale of funding support requested and the timing of the overall process.

Under the ARC’s largest scheme, the Discovery Projects scheme, the peer review structure incorporates members of the ARC College of Experts, Australian-based assessors (Ozreaders) and assessors with international standing (Intreaders). Members of the College of Experts assess and rank proposals and make funding recommendations to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Their work is supported by the assessments provided by the Oz- and Intreaders.

Comments sought

The ARC is proposing that the three levels of assessors used in the Discovery Projects scheme be retained but with some changes to the role and composition of each level.

Elements of the proposed structure would be applied to the review processes of other ARC schemes. However, most other ARC schemes would require only two levels of assessors (Peer Reviewers and Interdisciplinary Leaders) and the Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities scheme may only require one level (Interdisciplinary Leaders).

The changes proposed are aimed at:
- easing the workload of assessors
- facilitating the assignment of proposals to assessors with the most relevant expertise [see also Issue 3.4 Assignment of proposals to assessors – matching expertise]
- improving the quality of the outcomes with initial assessments only being undertaken by specialist assessors (rather than including generalist assessors as is currently the case)
providing better support for proposals involving interdisciplinary research and research in emerging areas
providing opportunities for more timely and detailed feedback to unsuccessful applicants [see also Issue 3.14 Feedback to applicants].

Under the revised structure, the three levels of assessors would primarily be concerned with assessment, moderation and ranking respectively as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Peer Reviewers</th>
<th>2. Panel Reviewers</th>
<th>3. Interdisciplinary Leaders</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As individuals:</td>
<td>Within Panel Review Committees:</td>
<td>Within Interdisciplinary Selection Advisory Committees:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide written evaluations and assessment of individual proposals against selection criteria</td>
<td>• Moderate assessment information (assessments and rejoinders)</td>
<td>• Consider Panel Review Committee recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Make funding recommendations for the Interdisciplinary Leaders</td>
<td>• Finalise funding recommendations and provide budget advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop preliminary feedback on uncompetitive proposals</td>
<td>• Finalise feedback to unsuccessful competitive proposals</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The detailed characteristics of the three levels proposed are as follows:

**Level 1 – ‘Peer Reviewers’**
- Peer Reviewers would be an extensive group of specialist assessors matched to proposals at the 6-digit Field of Research (FOR) code level. Peer Reviewers would be assigned to proposals on the basis of FOR codes and keywords.
- Peer Reviewers would be responsible for providing written evaluations and assessing individual proposals against set selection criteria [see also Issue 3.11 Assessment of proposals].
- Each Peer Reviewer would be asked to assess an average of 5-10 proposals (based on the expectation that each proposal would receive 3-5 assessments). Assessments involved with the Discovery Projects scheme would require 2000-4000 Peer Reviewers each year.
- Peer Reviewers would submit electronic assessment forms to the ARC through the Research Management System (RMS).
- A database of Peer Reviewers would be renewed annually by ARC Executive Directors through nominations made by Interdisciplinary Leaders, Panel Reviewers and Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Research) (or equivalent).

**Level 2 – ‘Panel Reviewers’**
- Panel Reviewers would be used in schemes with large volumes of proposals where they would be grouped into Panel Review Committees.
- Panel Reviewers would be matched to proposals at the 4-digit FOR code level. Panel Review Committees would be configured across the ARC’s discipline areas to provide the necessary breadth of expertise required.
Panel Reviewers would be expected to:
- assist in the assignment of proposals to Peer Reviewers
- moderate the assessment information provided by Peer Reviewers in conjunction with the rejoinder responses of applicants. In the case that the assessments were considered inadequate additional assessments may be sought.
- make funding recommendations to the Interdisciplinary Leaders (including the exclusion of clearly uncompetitive proposals from further consideration)
- develop preliminary feedback on uncompetitive proposals
- nominate suitable researchers to be added to the ARC’s Peer Reviewer database.

For the Discovery Projects scheme, the ARC would require approximately 25 Panel Review Committees. Each Panel Reviewer would be responsible for moderating approximately twenty proposals. There would be capacity to work across panels to review multidisciplinary proposals.

The Panel Review Committees would conduct their business electronically or via teleconference.

Panel Reviewers would be selected by ARC Executive Directors and Interdisciplinary Leaders informed by nominations by Deputy Vice-Chancellors (or equivalent) and consideration of new project participants (that is, researchers listed on successful proposals funded in the previous year).

Level 3 – ‘Interdisciplinary Leaders’
- Interdisciplinary Leaders would be Chairs and co-Chairs of the Panel Review Committees and would form Interdisciplinary Selection Advisory Committees. They would be matched to proposals at the 2-digit FOR code level.
- Interdisciplinary Leaders would be responsible for providing broad discipline expertise to facilitate a comparative overview of recommendations provided by Panel Review Committees.
- Interdisciplinary Leaders would be expected to:
  - consider Panel Review Committee recommendations and finalise rankings
  - make budget recommendations
  - provide feedback to be given to unsuccessful competitive proposals
  - nominate suitable researchers to be added to the ARC’s Peer Reviewer database
  - assist in the selection of Panel Review Committee members.

For the Discovery Projects scheme, the ARC would require approximately five Interdisciplinary Selection Advisory Committees, each made up of 12-20 Interdisciplinary Leaders.

Interdisciplinary Leaders would be selected through the same competitive nomination process that is currently used to replace retiring members of the ARC College of Experts.

To support the proposed structure, and associated peer review processes, the current role of ARC staff and Executive Directors may change.
3.2 Payment of assessors

**Issues:** Changes to the payment arrangements for assessors.

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

*Current arrangements*

The ARC currently pays each member of the College of Experts a salary and each Ozreader a fee based on the number of proposals assessed ($30 per proposal). No payments are made to Intreaders. While many Ozreaders do not claim the payment the process is administratively time-consuming. It has also led to inconsistencies with some Intreaders who are not paid assessing the same number of proposals as Ozreaders who are paid.

*Comments sought*

Under the revised structure (described at Issue 3.1), the ARC is proposing to continue to pay the Interdisciplinary Leaders (which are equivalent to the current members of the College of Experts) and discontinue payments to all other assessors. The costs of participation in meetings will continue to be met.

3.3 Participation of assessors

**Issues:** Identification of possible mechanisms for encouraging assessor participation.

**Questions:**
- Do you agree with the changes being considered?
- Do you have any suggestions for encouraging participation by assessors?
- Do you have any suggestions on ways to improve the assessor recruitment process?

*Current arrangements*

The ARC maintains a database of Oz- and Intreaders which is reviewed annually. New Ozreaders are selected by ARC Executive Directors from nominations made by members of the College of Experts and consideration of new project participants (that is, researchers listed on successful proposals funded in the previous year). Executive Directors also review the quality of assessments, and response rate, of existing Ozreaders to determine which Ozreaders should be retained. Each year the College of Expert members add suitable Intreader assessors to the database during the assignment of *Discovery Projects* proposals.

The ARC is finding it increasingly difficult to obtain an adequate number of assessments. Due to a variety of reasons, including workload and time constraints, potential assessors decline the ARC’s request to become, or continue to be, an Ozreader. Although ARC-funded researchers undertake to participate in the ARC’s peer review processes through their acceptance of the terms and conditions set out in scheme funding agreements, some highly successful ARC-funded researchers are not in the Ozreader database (which is confidential from their employers). This creates gaps in the areas of expertise for which Ozreaders are available, resulting in some proposals having a better match of assessor expertise to proposal content than others.
Comments sought

The ARC expects that the revised structure (described at Issue 3.1) will simplify the assessment processes and address the concerns of potential Level 1 Peer Reviewers with regard to workload. The ARC is also considering:

- 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.

3.4 Assignment of proposals to assessors – matching expertise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue:</th>
<th>Matching potential assessors with research proposals using FOR codes at the 6-digit level.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Questions: | Do you agree with the process proposed for assigning proposals to Peer Reviewers?  
| | Do you have any suggestions about how this process might be strengthened? |

Current arrangements

Potential Ozreaders and Intreaders are matched to proposals through the use of keywords, the content of the 100 word summaries and RFCD codes. Some difficulties have been experienced with no suitable match being identified in some cases or a match being made at a very broad discipline level in other cases.

Comments sought

The ARC is proposing to allocate proposals to Level 1 Peer Reviewers through the matching of FOR codes at the 6-digit level in conjunction with keywords. The ARC’s RMS will allow Peer Reviewers to nominate 6-digit FOR codes that best describe their area of expertise. Similarly, when applicants submit proposals in RMS, they will be required to select 6-digit FOR codes that best describe the type of research covered within the proposal. To inform the assignment process, RMS will be used to produce reports that list suitable Peer Reviewers for each proposal, based on the best match of FOR codes. In using keywords, the ARC will aim to use existing standard discipline classifications (where available) and liaise with the research sector to develop discipline keyword lists.

3.5 Assignment of proposals to assessors – avoiding conflict of interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue:</th>
<th>Assessor Conflicts of Interest can create inequalities in the peer review of proposals.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions:</td>
<td>Do you have any suggestions to improve the ARC’s handling of assessor Conflicts of Interest?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Current arrangements [Appendix A: Reference 3]

One of the principles underpinning the ARC’s peer review process is the appropriate management and transparency of cases of Conflict of Interest.
Proposals are not assigned to College of Expert members, Oz- or Intreaders that have a known Conflict of Interest with a proposal. A Conflict of Interest arises where the assessor’s other interests or associations could, or could be seen to, improperly influence the performance of their duties as an assessor. Conflicts of Interest include: one or more of the named investigators on the proposal are employees of the assessor’s institution; an assessor has a close personal involvement with one or more of the named investigators; the assessor has a professional involvement with one or more of the named investigators; the assessor has an interest (e.g. pecuniary) in a partner organisation; the assessor has supervised or published with one or more of the named investigators in the past five years.

There are a substantial number of Conflicts of Interest and the ARC’s current handling of conflicts may mean that a proposal cannot be assigned to assessors (including CoEs, Oz- and Intreaders) with the most suitable areas of expertise. The ARC is aware that this may create inequalities in the peer review of proposals, because some proposals are assessed by assessors whose expertise does not match the research area of the proposal as comprehensively as assessors assigned to other proposals.

Comments sought

The ARC is seeking suggestions for ways that the impact of Conflict of Interest considerations might be addressed. One option would be to apply different levels of Conflict of Interest principles to different assessor levels.

3.6 Selection criteria – clarity and composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue:</th>
<th>The clarity of the selection criteria descriptions, particularly those relating to ‘significance and innovation’ in the Discovery Projects scheme.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question:</td>
<td>Do you have any suggestions to improve the clarity and composition of selection criteria used in ARC schemes?</td>
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</table>

Current arrangements [Appendix A: Reference 4]

Selection criteria set out in scheme funding rules form the foundation for the ARC’s peer review processes. It is important that the selection criteria by which proposals are assessed are appropriate and clear to applicants and assessors.

Currently the selection criteria in the Discovery Projects scheme include:

(a) Investigator

i. Track record relative to opportunity
ii. capacity to undertake the proposed research

(b) Proposed project content

i. Significance and innovation
ii. Approach and methodology
iii. National benefit

The ARC has received feedback that ‘Proposed project content’ components are not clear and the current composition of criteria should be reviewed.

It has also been suggested that the selection criteria have different meanings for different schemes. For example, significance may have a different meaning for the Discovery Projects scheme (aimed at blue sky research) compared with the Linkage Projects scheme (aimed at more applied research with industry, government and community).
Comments sought

The ARC is concerned about the clarity and composition of selection criteria and is seeking feedback on possible changes it could consider. One option is to separate significance and innovation into separate criteria components. There may also be additional criteria that could be included.

3.7 Selection criteria – assessment of track record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue:</th>
<th>Improving the assessment of track record.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question:</td>
<td>Please comment on the proposed replacement of “track record” with “research opportunities and performance evidence”?</td>
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</table>

Current arrangements

Under the current selection criteria, investigators are assessed in relation to their track record relative to opportunities and their capacity to undertake the proposed research. However, the ARC considers that the current selection criteria may not adequately encourage assessors to consider the merit of proposals in the context of the employment conditions of participants. This may unfairly bias the success rate of researchers in research only positions, compared to those in teaching only, teaching and research or administrative positions, researchers who have had career interruptions and early-career researchers. Furthermore, the current selection criteria do not adequately recognise discipline differences in regard to the type of research outputs and their research impact.

Comments sought

To address these issues the ARC is considering removing the concept of “Track Record” and replacing it with “Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE)”.

- Research opportunity would be designed to enable assessors to get a clear idea of:
  - years since graduation and highest educational qualification
  - research opportunities in the context of employment situation
  - research component of employment conditions, and unemployment
  - any career interruptions for child birth, carers responsibilities, misadventure, or debilitating illness
  - research mentoring and facilities available
  - any other relevant aspects of career or opportunities for research.

- Performance evidence would include assessment and contextualizing of research outputs relative to the opportunity of a participant and in the context of discipline expectations. In addition to publications, research outputs could include consultancies, patents and policy advice, competitive grants and other research support, higher degree student completions, major exhibitions, compositions or performances, invited keynote and speaker addresses and other professional activities and contributions to the research field. Both research output assessment and contextualizing within disciplinary expectations of research impact would be needed.

Evidence of research performance could then be assessed relative to opportunity, for its impact in a variety of ways, and in the context of disciplinary expectations.
3.8 Selection criteria – weighting of individual criterion

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

**Question:** Do you think the current weightings are appropriate?

*Current arrangements [Appendix A: Reference 5]*

Under the *Discovery Projects* scheme, selection criteria relating to Investigators are weighted at 40 percent while those for the proposed project content are weighted 60 percent. The ARC is aware that this may increase the likelihood of excellent researchers, regardless of the excellence of the proposed project, receiving funding; and researchers with an excellent proposed project and a lesser track record, or researchers who are working in more novel and/or riskier research areas, finding it difficult to compete.

*Comments sought*

The ARC is seeking feedback from the research sector about the weightings currently assigned to Investigators and Project content.

3.9 Early-career-researchers

**Issue:** Encouraging proposals from early-career researchers.

**Questions:** Do you agree with the changes proposed?
Do you have any alternative suggestions?

*Current arrangements*

Under current arrangements, proposals from early-career researchers (ECRs) are assessed in the same manner as other proposals. To accommodate relative lack of experience, assessors are asked to assess track record ‘relative to opportunity’. High quality ECR-only proposals are also lifted from below the funding cut-off to increase the success rate of ECR-only proposals to meet an ECR budget quota of 15%. Nevertheless, the number of ECR-only proposals is dropping in some disciplines.

*Comments sought*

The replacement of the track record selection criterion with the ROPE selection criterion (described at Issue 3.7) may encourage a greater number of ECR proposals and more effectively take into account the opportunity for research an ECR candidate has had.

The ARC is considering whether any other amendments could be made to the current peer review processes to ensure that ECRs are not disadvantaged. One option would be to adopt a similar method for handling proposals from ECRs as that used by the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The person versus project ratio used by SSHRC for an ECR proposal can be 60/40 or 40/60 (whichever provides the most favourable overall score).

The ARC seeks feedback from the research sector in regard to the possible implementation of this ECR scoring mechanism.
3.10 Career interruptions

**Issue:** Encouraging proposals from researchers who have experienced career interruptions.

**Questions:**
- Do you agree with the changes proposed?
- Do you have any alternative suggestions?

*Current arrangements*

The ARC is also considering what strategies could be implemented to support researchers who have had career interruptions, such as women returning to work or working part-time to cater for family responsibilities.

*Comments sought*

The introduction of ROPE selection criteria (described at Issue 3.7) may promote better assessment of proposals from researchers who have experienced career interruptions.

Another possibility would be the introduction of a ‘career support fellowship’ into the *Discovery Projects* scheme aimed specifically at researchers in this category. The ARC envisages that, if such a strategy was introduced it would initially be introduced in the *Discovery Projects* scheme and operate in a similar manner to the International Collaborative Awards (ICAs) introduced this year. In the case of ICAs, applicants could request an ICA for individual proposal participants within the *Discovery Projects* application form.

The ARC invites research sector feedback in regard to introducing a ‘career support fellowship’ to the *Discovery Projects* scheme.

3.11 Assessment of proposals

**Issue:** Increasing the level of confidence in the assessments provided.

**Questions:**
- Do you agree with the introduction of an assessor confidence level indicator?
- Do you have any other ideas for improvements the ARC could make to the assessor form?

*Current arrangements* [Appendix A, References 4 and 5]

Assessors are asked to provide comments and scores against selection criteria. An assessor’s final weighted score (according to the weighting of individual selection criterion) is then automatically calculated for the proposal. The ARC provides advice to assessors on the degree of merit associated with specified scoring bands as a guide.

*Comments sought*

Confidence in the scores and assessments provided by assessors is a critical element of the peer review process. The ARC is considering instituting a process whereby Peer Reviewers are able to indicate the level of confidence they have in the assessment they are making.

The ARC is also considering what other changes could be made to current assessor forms to improve the information provided by Peer Reviewers to inform Panel Review Committees.
3.12 Ranking of proposals

| Issue: | Identification of an alternative mechanism for ranking proposals. |
| Questions: | Do you agree with the introduction of banding versus scores? |
| | Do you have any suggestions for how the ranking process might be conducted? |

Current arrangements [Appendix A, Reference 6]

Under the current process a Weighted Average Percent Rank (WAPR) system is used to initially rank proposals in many ARC schemes. However, the WAPR system has a variety of drawbacks, including weighting biases against assessors submitting very few assessments. Currently, the ARC’s College of Experts and Selection Advisory Committee members manually account for such issues during selection meeting deliberations.

Comments sought

As part of this review the ARC will seek to develop an alternative option to the current ranking system. The revised structure (described at Issue 3.1) may provide an opportunity to introduce a banding or aggregating process to rank proposals. For example, Panel Reviewers may review assessments and rank competitive proposals into fundable bands and indentify uncompetitive proposals.

The development of an alternative ranking system is a complex task and the ARC will call upon the expertise of an external reference group to provide input to the process. The ARC will carefully consider the advantages and risks of any alternative to the current ranking system, before deciding on a replacement to the existing system.

3.13 Research proposal budgets

| Issue: | (i) Separation of decisions about budget allocations from decisions about the quality of a proposal. |
| | (ii) Simplifying proposal budget requests. |
| Questions: | Should the ARC simplify proposal budget requests? |
| | Do you agree that the ARC should separate responsibilities for assessing the quality of proposals and making budget allocations? |

Current arrangements [Appendix A: Reference 7]

Currently, proposals include detailed budget tables outlining all the items the applicant proposes to purchase if successful. Members of the College of Experts consider the budgets of individual proposals at selection meetings held in April and August each year and make recommendations on the budget to the CEO. Members spend a significant amount of time considering budgets and the process adds considerably to their administrative burden.

Comments sought

It may be possible to simplify the budget information sought from applicants within proposals. Applicants could be requested to apply for a particular funding allocation. For example, applicants could be requested to select a funding level within the proposal application form (such as $100,000, $200,000, etc). Note: applicants would still be required to justify their budget request, including what items would be purchased with the funding.
Another option the ARC could consider is a separation of budget recommendation and assessment responsibilities. A number of overseas agencies use models which separate budget responsibilities from the ranking process, with the staff of the agency or other reviewers undertaking this task. The revised structure (described at Issue 3.1) could incorporate a change to budget responsibilities.

3.14 Feedback to applicants

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

| Questions:   | What improvements could the ARC make to the feedback provided to unsuccessful applicants?  
               | Do you agree with the changes proposed?  

Current arrangements [Appendix A: Reference 8]

Currently, the ARC provides minimal feedback to unsuccessful applicants at the end of the selection process (that is, following the announcement of the outcomes in September/October). Many researchers have raised concerns regarding the usefulness of this feedback for unsuccessful applicants attempting to revise and submit proposals for future rounds. Periodically there are also concerns about the length of time between submission of proposals and notification of outcomes and in particular the effect of this on attracting the best fellowship candidates and retaining key staff.

Comments sought

The ARC will consider whether the revised structure (described at Issue 3.1) would allow the ARC to provide:

- 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.

Under the revised structure feedback could be provided to applicants at two points in the process.

- Panel Review Committees would be asked to identify those proposals that they consider are uncompetitive and should be excluded from further consideration. If resources allow, Review Panels could also prepare feedback to uncompetitive proposals.
- In the case of proposals that are considered to be competitive and are recommended to the Interdisciplinary Selection Advisory Committees, the Interdisciplinary Leaders could prepare feedback for competitive proposals that are not funded.

The ARC invites suggestions on how the nature and timeliness of notification of proposal outcomes may be improved.
3.15 Restrictions on proposals

| Issue: | Restrictions on reapplying under the Discovery Projects scheme. |
| Questions: |
| Do you agree with the principle of restricting applications? |
| If yes, do you have any comments on the restriction that has been introduced? |
| Are there alternative mechanisms the ARC might consider? |

Current arrangements [Appendix A: Reference 2]

Under the current round of the Discovery Projects scheme, the ARC implemented restrictions on re-applying applicants. A proposal may not be submitted if it is essentially the same as an unsuccessful proposal submitted in the previous round which was ranked in Group E (the bottom 25% of unsuccessful proposals). This restriction was introduced to improve the quality of Discovery Projects proposals submitted to the ARC and reduce the resources that are consumed each year by similar uncompetitive proposals undergoing the ARC’s full peer review process.

Comments sought

The ARC is seeking views on the restrictions that have been introduced and the general principle of restricting proposals. Suggestions for alternative mechanisms are also sought.

3.16 General comments

We would be interested in any other feedback and/or suggestions relating to the ARC’s peer review processes you may wish to make.

This includes identifying those elements of the peer review process you think are working well and should not be changed.

Alternatively, if there are elements that you believe need changing that haven’t been raised, we’re interested in hearing about those too.
1. INTRODUCTION

The ARC funds research and researchers under the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP). The NCGP consists of two elements – Discovery and Linkage. Within these elements are a range of schemes structured to provide a pathway of incentives for researchers to build the scope and scale of their work and collaborative partnerships. The majority of funding decisions under the NCGP are made on the basis of peer review.

2. PRINCIPLES

The ARC’s peer review processes involve:
- peer review by experts who assess individual research proposals within their field of research or across a broader disciplinary area on the basis of established selection criteria
- processes under which arrangements for assessment are clearly articulated in published documentation
- robust conflicts of interest processes to ensure conflicts are managed and transparent
- the receipt of proposals in confidence, except where required to be released under law, for example under the Freedom of Information Act 1982
- the provision of a right of reply to assessments (in most ARC schemes).

3. PEER REVIEW ROLES

3.1 Overview

Depending on the scheme, peer review of proposals may be undertaken by: members of the ARC College of Experts (CoE); Ozreaders; Intreaders and/or other eminent researchers. A description of assessor roles is provided in section 3.2 below.

The ARC CoE members are currently divided among six panels: Biological Sciences and Biotechnology (BSB), Engineering and Environmental Science (EE), Humanities and Creative Arts (HCA), Mathematics, Information and Communication Sciences (MIC), Physics, Chemistry and Earth Sciences (PCE), and Social Behavioural and Economic Sciences (SBE).

Under larger schemes, such as Discovery Projects and Linkage Projects, all six panels of the College of Experts convene for selection meetings. In other schemes, such as Australian Laureate Fellowships and Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities schemes, a single cross-disciplinary Selection Advisory Committee is appointed consisting of both ARC College of Expert members and other eminent researchers.
## 3.2 Description of key roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>COLLEGE OF EXPERTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>The ARC College of Experts consists of 78 members who are experts of international standing drawn from the Australian research community, including higher education, industry and public sector research organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Members of the ARC College of Experts:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>assign Intreaders to <em>Discovery Projects</em> proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>participate in selection panels for the ARC’s <em>Discovery Projects</em> and <em>Linkage Projects</em> schemes, where members submit initial assessments, review Ozreader and Intreader assessments and applicant rejoinders, rank proposals and make funding recommendations to the ARC CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>provide strategic advice to the ARC on emerging disciplinary and cross-disciplinary developments, and innovative approaches to research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Each year members of the College of Experts submit assessments to the ARC, assign Intreaders to <em>Discovery Projects</em> proposals and participate in two Canberra-based meetings over eight days. CoE members may also be appointed to Selection Advisory Committees for various ARC schemes and carryout additional assessment and reviewer duties as well as attend additional selection meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remuneration</td>
<td>Salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>Members are appointed, by the Minister, for terms of between one and three years. Every year the ARC conducts a competitive nomination process to replace retiring members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OZREADERS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Ozreaders are Australian-based readers whose research interests span the broad field/s of the research projects they are asked to assess. The ARC assessor database currently contains approximately 1000 active Ozreaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Ozreaders assess proposals against selection criteria set out in scheme funding rules and are requested to score, rank and provide written comments for each proposal by submitting an electronic assessment form through the ARC’s online application system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Ozreaders are sent approximately 20 proposals (across different schemes) each year for assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remuneration</td>
<td>Ozreaders are provided with a small payment for their services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>Ozreaders are reviewed annually by ARC Executive Directors. New Ozreaders are selected through CoE member nominations and ARC consideration of new project participants (i.e. each year the ARC reviews the participants of proposals which were successful the previous year and, where suitable, adds funded researchers not already listed to the Ozreader database).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTREADERS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Intreaders are internationally acknowledged experts in the specific field of a proposed research project. Chosen for their specialist knowledge and outstanding research reputation, Intreaders are asked to assess in the context of international research and benchmarks. The ARC assessor database contains approximately 18,000 Intreaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Intreaders assess proposals against selection criteria set out in scheme funding rules and are requested to score, rank and provide written comments for each proposal by submitting an electronic assessment form through the ARC’s online application system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>Intreaders may assess up to 5 proposals per year (average of 2.5 proposals per year).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remuneration</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>Intreaders are updated annually by CoE members. CoE members select new Intreaders during the <em>Discovery Projects</em> assignment process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. PEER REVIEW PROCESS

4.1 Release of guidance material

Every funding round begins with the development of funding rules – the blueprint describing the eligibility criteria and accountability requirements for funding proposals. The funding rules are fundamental to the smooth administration of the funding scheme. In developing the funding rules, the ARC considers feedback from the research sector. This includes responses to the ARC’s annual consultation on funding rules and feedback from Deputy and Pro-Vice Chancellors (Research). The draft funding rules are considered by the ARC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) before final approval is sought from the Minister.

4.2 Submission of proposals

Submission

Most ARC proposals require an application form to be completed on-line application system. Currently, the ARC’s Grant Application Management System (GAMS) is being replaced by the Research Management System (RMS). The proposal application form and the ‘Instructions to Applicants’ documents assist researchers in electronically submitting their proposals for funding through either system.

Under GAMS, applicants are required to submit two hard copy application forms, with attached additional documentation, to the ARC by the closing time. When using the ARC’s RMS additional documentation is electronically uploaded to the application form and there is no requirement to send hard copy proposals to the ARC. The funding rules set out closing times for submitting proposals.

Eligibility

To be considered for funding, proposals must meet eligibility requirements specified within ARC scheme funding rules. Proposals may only be submitted by applicants who are eligible organisations listed in the scheme funding rules. Proposals must also be completed according to format and submission requirements specified in scheme ‘Instructions to Applicants’ documents.

Most ARC scheme funding rules describe a number of situations where it is possible for applicants to submit an eligibility exemption request or an eligibility advice request for the purposes of obtaining an exemption or advice from the ARC regarding a prospective proposal. The closing time for submission of such requests is set out in the funding rules. The main types of eligibility exemption and advice requests are: requests seeking a relaxation of the qualification and/or timing requirements for a fellowship candidate and requests seeking advice on the suitability of a potential proposal that includes medical and/or dental research.

Requests not to assess

Applicants may provide written notification to the ARC naming any person or persons whom they do not wish to assess their proposal. Normally, requests must contain detailed justification and be submitted to the ARC by the closing time for the proposal. The process for submitting these requests are set out in scheme funding rules. The responsible Executive Director considers each request and the justification provided, but may choose not to give effect to any a request.
Restrictions on proposals

For the current round of the *Discovery Projects* scheme, the ARC has implemented restrictions on re-applying applicants. A proposal may not be submitted if it is essentially the same as an unsuccessful proposal submitted in the previous round and was ranked in group E (bottom 25% of unsuccessful proposals).

4.3 Receipt and assignment of proposals

**Receipt**

Once received by the ARC proposals are vetted by ARC staff for eligibility. If a proposal is deemed to be potentially ineligible, the proposal is sent for consideration by the ARC eligibility committee. The relevant administering organisation is advised when a proposal is identified as potentially ineligible. The administering organisation may provide further information if required. All proposals, regardless of their eligibility status, undergo the same peer review process.

**Assignment**

For schemes with multiple selection panels, as soon as the closing time for proposals has passed, proposals are matched to a selection panel using the Fields of Research (FOR) codes applicants have selected within the proposal. ARC Executive Directors review the appropriateness of the proposals in each panel and may transfer proposals to different panels if required. They also identify cross-disciplinary proposals that will require assessors from more than one discipline panel. Once these processes are finalised, the responsible Executive Director assigns at least two CoE members to each proposal. For schemes with a single cross-disciplinary panel, the responsible Executive Director assigns at least two SAC members to each proposal.

Each scheme varies in its use of assessors depending on the objectives of the scheme, the scale of funding support requested and the timing of the overall process. In most schemes, Executive Directors assign proposals to an appropriate number of Ozreaders. In *Discovery Projects*, CoE members also assign up to four Intreaders per proposal.

As far as possible, the ARC aims to assign assessors to proposals whose areas of expertise best matches the research described in the proposal. However there are sometimes cases where the ARC has misunderstood an assessor’s area of expertise. The ARC advises all assessors that they may decline to assess a proposal if they consider a proposal to involve research that is outside their area of expertise.
Conflict of Interest

Assessors may also decline to assess proposals if they consider it to be a conflict of interest to do so. The ARC advises all assessors that they should not assess any proposal for which they have an apparent or potential conflict of interest and provides guidance on the types of situations that should be avoided.

The ARC's Confidentiality Obligations and Conflict of Interest Guidelines are published on the ARC’s website. The guidelines are designed to ensure that all members of the ARC's CoE and SACs are aware of the confidentiality obligations associated with College activities and that conflicts of interest are identified and addressed in a rigorous and transparent way. The ARC requires CoE and SAC members to provide assurances to the ARC that they will abide by the ARC's confidentiality requirements and will disclose to it any conflicts of interest related to their official duties as members. The ARC keeps a register of the private interests of CoE members.

4.4 Assessment process

Assessment forms and selection criteria

CoE members, Ozreaders and Intreaders submit online assessment forms to the ARC through its online application system. They are each asked to assess the merits of a proposal against selection criteria set out in scheme funding rules. The structure of the assessment form varies from scheme to scheme, but typically assessment forms request scores and written comments for each selection criteria. Guidance is provided to assessors on the degree of merit associated with particular scoring bands (see Reference 3 below). A total weighted score, which takes into account the set criteria weightings, is automatically calculated when the assessor saves their assessment.

The selection criteria for proposals are set out in the scheme funding rules. Selection criteria and weightings vary from scheme to scheme to fit the nature and objectives of each scheme. However, most scheme selection criteria including investigator track record and proposed program of research components. The selection criteria under the Discovery Projects scheme are provided in Reference 4 below.

When assessing the track records of researchers nominated in a proposal, assessors are advised that it is important to take into account the opportunities that the researchers have had to build their research profile. For example, researchers who are relatively early in their career, or who have had an interrupted career, should have these facts taken into account. Similarly, researchers whose current or previous conditions of employment have allowed them a relatively large amount of research time should have this taken into account.
Selection criteria

All Discovery Projects proposals are assessed and merit ranked using the following criteria:

(a) Investigator (40%)
   i. track record relative to opportunities
   ii. capacity to undertake the proposed research

(b) Proposed project content (60%)
   i. Significance and innovation (30%)
      - does the research address an important problem?
      - how will the anticipated outcomes advance the knowledge base of the discipline?
      - is the research principally focussed upon a topic or outcome that falls within one of the National Research Priorities and associated Priority Goals, and if so how does it address the National Research Priority?
      - are the proposal's aims and concepts novel and innovative?
      - will new methods or technologies be developed?

   ii. Approach and methodology (20%)
      - are the conceptual framework, design, methods and analyses adequately developed, well integrated and appropriate to the aims of the proposal?
      - how appropriate is the proposed budget?

   iii. National benefit (10%)
      - what is the potential of the research project to result in economic, environmental and/or social benefits for Australia from the expected results and outcomes of the project?
      - what is the potential for the research to contribute to the National Research Priorities?

Scoring

Recognising the subjective character of scores, the ARC provides the following advice to assessors on the degree of merit associated with specified scoring bands as a guide.

- **Scoring band 91-100**: Outstanding – of the highest merit, at the forefront of international research in the field. Less than 2% of proposals should receive scores in this band.
- **Scoring band 86-90**: Excellent – Strongly competitive at international levels. Less than 20% of proposals should receive scores in this band.
- **Scoring band 81-85**: Very good – An interesting, sound, compelling proposal. Approximately 30% of proposals will have a score in this band. Approximately 50% of proposals will have scores above 80.
- **Scoring band 76-80**: Good – A sound research proposal, but lacks a compelling element. Approximately 30% of proposals are likely to fall into this band.
- **Scoring band 71-75**: Fair – The proposal has potential, but requires development to be supportable. Up to 20% of proposals are likely to have a score below 75.
- **Scoring band 0-70**: Flawed – the proposal has one or more flaws.
Rejoinder

In most ARC schemes, once the initial assessments by assessors are completed and submitted to the ARC, researchers are invited to respond to the written comments from the assessors via a rejoinder process. Scores and assessor details are not released to applicants. Rejoinders allow applicants and nominated participants to clarify any misunderstanding or difference of opinion about perceived weaknesses in the proposal. It also provides an important feedback mechanism that may help researchers in future proposals. The assessors’ reports and the rejoinders also assist the ARC CoE members in reviewing proposals.

Selection Meetings

In the Discovery Projects and Linkage Projects schemes, following the rejoinder process, members of the CoE meet in their discipline groups to consult each other, rank the proposals, and determine to what extent the competitive proposals ought to be funded. A recommendation for funding is made to the ARC CEO.

There are two main CoE meetings each year:
- In April a small meeting is held to consider proposals submitted to the second round of the Linkage Projects scheme and assign Intreaders to Discovery Projects proposals
- In August a larger meeting is held to consider proposals submitted in the annual round of Discovery Projects and the first round of Linkage Projects.

SAC meetings for other ARC schemes are also held periodically throughout the year, depending on the timelines of particular schemes. They may include some members of the CoE.

Reference 6

Ranking of proposals

For most ARC schemes, a Weighted Average Percent Rank (WAPR) formula is used to combine CoE, Ozreader and Intreader assessments submitted for each proposal. This provides a single value for each proposal, ranging from 0 to 100, allowing proposals to be sorted into an initial ranked list for each selection panel.

To determine a final ranked list, the selection panel considers and discusses proposals – particularly those around the funding margin. Selection panel members may revise the ranking of a proposal in response to a number of factors including: assessor reports; persuasive rejoinder arguments; and panel discussions comparing the relative merits of proposals against the selection criteria. Selection panel members also take into account any WAPR anomalies.
Assignment of budgets

Once a CoE selection panel has determined the final ranked list of proposals, members determine funding recommendations for all proposals in the fundable range. Selection panel members consider in detail each proposal budget request and recommend an appropriate level of funding. Selection panel members may recommend less than requested funding in cases where the proposal budget is considered to be inflated, is inadequately justified or includes items that are prohibited. Each scheme’s funding rules set out what type of funding may be requested and any budget item restrictions.

4.5 Awards outcomes

ARC CEO’s recommendation

On advice from the CoE or SAC, the ARC CEO makes funding recommendations to the Minister. Approval of proposal expenditure rests with the Minister. Generally, the Minister acts on advice from the ARC CEO; however, if the Minister does not approve a proposal, a public explanation for that decision will be provided. An approval process is in place to enable the Minister to meet this undertaking.

Notification

Once the Minister has approved and announced the funding recommendations, the ARC may notify organisations of the individual outcomes of their proposals. On its website, the ARC publishes a selection report, providing an analysis of funding outcomes for the scheme round, and listings of successful proposals. Emails and hard copy packages are sent to the relevant research offices to provide a summary of each organisation’s individual proposal outcomes. Hard copy packages also contain individual notification letters for distribution to the first-named researcher of each proposal. Researchers are notified whether their proposal was successful, unsuccessful, placed on a reserve list or deemed to be ineligible.

Feedback to applicants

For ineligible proposals, researchers are advised of the reason(s) a proposal was deemed to be ineligible. In the case of unsuccessful proposals, feedback outlining the reason(s) a proposal was considered uncompetitive may be included.
The type of feedback provided varies from scheme to scheme. Under the *Discovery Projects* scheme unsuccessful applicants are notified of the grouping in which their proposal ranked, that is:

- B+ (Top 5% of unsuccessful proposals)
- B (Between top 5% and top 10% of unsuccessful proposals)
- C+ (Between top 10% and top 25% of unsuccessful proposals)
- C (Between top 25% and top 50% of unsuccessful proposals)
- D (Between top 50% and top 75% of unsuccessful proposals)
- E (Remainder of unsuccessful proposals).

Some ARC schemes provide general text comments indicating the selection criteria against which a proposal was deemed uncompetitive.

### Funding agreements

Successful administering organisations are sent a Funding Agreement, outlining the terms and conditions by which any successful proposals must be administered. Funding for successful proposals (now projects) commences as soon as two copies of the Funding Agreement have been signed by the appropriate delegate of the administering organisation and counter-signed by an ARC Executive Director.

### 4.6 Appeals process

The funding rules for the various ARC funding schemes make provision for an appeals process. Appeals will be considered only against process issues and not against committee decisions or assessor ratings and comments. Appeals must be made on the appeals form available from the ARC's website. The form must be lodged through the relevant administering organisation's research office and be received, within 28 days of the date on the letter notifying the outcomes of proposals.

The ARC appoints an Appeals Committee to hear appeals and make recommendations to the ARC's CEO. In general the functions of the Appeals Committee are to:

- consider valid appeals submitted to the ARC to determine whether there has been any error in the administrative process relating to the selection process
- determine whether any such errors led to a defect in decision-making by the ARC and/or the Minister which adversely affected the proposal
- recommend to the ARC whether to uphold or dismiss an appeal
- provide advice to the ARC in relation to how its administrative processes could be modified or improved.

Following receipt of the appellants' submissions, the ARC prepares material for the Appeals Committee's consideration. This includes collating the appellant's submission and background information relating to the appeal (generally the ARC's submission outlines relevant provisions of the funding rules and the processes which are applied during the selection process). The ARC provides the appellant with a copy of the material it is submitting to the Appeals Committee for information. The Appeals Committee usually meets two times per year (usually around July/August and again around December/January) to consider appeals arising from recent funding rounds.
### 5. SCHEDULING

An outline of the timetable of activities under the *Discovery Projects* scheme is provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>WHO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Release approved funding rules.</td>
<td>ARC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applications open.</td>
<td>MINISTER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Funding proposal submitted.</td>
<td>APPLICANT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submissions vetted for eligibility. If potentially ineligible,</td>
<td>ARC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>proposal is sent to Eligibility Committee.</td>
<td>APPLICANT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administering organisations informed if the ARC considers a proposal</td>
<td>ARC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>potentially ineligible.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ARC Executive Directors determine which panel, College of Experts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(CoE) members, and Ozreaders should be assigned to assess each</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>proposal and whether proposals need to be considered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>multidisciplinary or transferred to another panel*.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CoE members assign Intreaders.</td>
<td>COLLEGE OF EXPERTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proposal is assessed by the two CoE members, and by Oz-</td>
<td>ASSESSORS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Intreaders. In the case of the <em>Discovery Projects</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>scheme, after they carry out their initial scoring, CoEs may</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>also be informed by the assessments of the other CoE, Oz-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Intreaders in deciding their final first draft scores.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-June to</td>
<td>Researchers are invited to respond to assessments via a rejoinder</td>
<td>APPLICANTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>form.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ARC prepares a spreadsheet of all applications to be considered by</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the discipline panel.</td>
<td>ARC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>The two CoE members again consult each other and, taking into</td>
<td>COLLEGE OF EXPERTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>account the Oz and Intreaders assessments, may amend the total score</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>given to a proposal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>ARC collates the rankings.</td>
<td>ARC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CoE panel meeting determine which proposals, and to what extent,</td>
<td>COLLEGE OF EXPERTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>should be recommended for funding.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scrutiny Committee meets.</td>
<td>SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eligibility Committee meets to confirm eligibility</td>
<td>ARC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>recommendations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funding recommendations are made to the ARC CEO.</td>
<td>COLLEGE OF EXPERTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>ARC CEO makes funding recommendation to the Minister; Funding</td>
<td>ARC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>announcement is made by the Minister.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applicants can submit an appeal against process issues within 28</td>
<td>APPLICANTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>days of notification of the outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Appeals Committee meets to consider appeals.</td>
<td>APPEALS COMMITTEE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTES**

* Multidisciplinary proposals are assigned to members of different panels
## SUPPORTING STATISTICS

### Proposals:

**Table 1: Total number of Discovery Projects proposals considered**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSB</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCA</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIC</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCG</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>696</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBE</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,152</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,112</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,033</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Total number of Linkage Projects proposals considered**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSB</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCA</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIC</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCG</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBE</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>963</strong></td>
<td><strong>911</strong></td>
<td><strong>957</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Assessments:

**Table 3: Average number of Discovery Projects assessments received per proposal**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessor Type</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Expert</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ozreader</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intreader</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td><strong>5.02</strong></td>
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</table>

**Table 4: Average number of Linkage Projects assessments received per proposal**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessor Type</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Expert</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ozreader</td>
<td>1.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td><strong>3.84</strong></td>
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Assessors:

Table 5a: Total number of assessors used to assess Discovery Projects proposals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessor Type</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College of Expert</td>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ozreader</td>
<td></td>
<td>1128</td>
<td>918</td>
<td>870</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intreader</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Table 5b: Average number of Discovery Projects assessments submitted by assessors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessor Type</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>College of Expert</td>
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<td>107.83</td>
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<td>Ozreader</td>
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<td>Intreader</td>
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<td>2.41</td>
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</table>

Table 6a: Total number of assessors used to assess Linkage Projects proposals

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Assessor Type</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>2007</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College of Expert</td>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>98</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ozreader</td>
<td></td>
<td>682</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>538</td>
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</table>

Table 6b: Average number of Linkage Projects assessments submitted by assessors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessor Type</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>2007</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College of Expert</td>
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<td>19.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ozreader</td>
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