



Australian Government
Australian Research Council

Medical Research Policy

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The Australian Research Council

The Australian Research Council (ARC) is a Commonwealth entity within the Australian Government. The ARC's purpose is to grow knowledge and innovation for the benefit of the Australian community through funding the highest quality research, assessing the quality, engagement and impact of research and providing advice on research matters.

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.

The ARC evaluates the quality of research undertaken in higher education institutions through the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) program. ERA is an established evaluation framework that identifies research excellence in Australian higher education institutions by comparing Australia's research effort against international benchmarks. ERA assesses quality using a combination of indicators and expert review by research evaluation committees.

The ARC is also responsible for developing and implementing an Engagement and Impact assessment, announced by the Australian Government in December 2015 as part of the National Science and Innovation Agenda (NISA), which will assess the engagement of researchers with end-users, and show how universities are translating their research into economic, social, environmental and other impacts.

Purpose and Scope

For the purposes of this policy, the definition of medical and health research includes laboratory-based studies, clinical studies and group/community-based studies that aim to understand the causes, treatment and/or prevention of human diseases and/or the maintenance of human health. The ARC does not normally fund research with these aims.

Proposals will be considered ineligible for funding under the ARC's National Competitive Grants Program if they include pre-clinical or clinical medical or health research, including investigations in which humans, animals, or their tissues are used to assess new treatments, interventions or tests as a means to prevent, detect, treat or manage a human disease or medical condition. The ARC may, however, fund related research to address specific Australian Government medical and health research priorities, either solely or in concert with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)¹.

This policy details research which is eligible for ARC support. The intended aim is to reduce the likelihood of applicants preparing and submitting proposals to the ARC which are ineligible for funding. Applicants must justify in their proposals why the proposal is considered to be compliant with this policy. The ARC may rely solely on the statement in the proposal to determine whether a proposal is eligible.

¹ The ARC acknowledges the assistance provided by the NHMRC in reviewing the ARC Medical Research Policy.

Those seeking funding for medical or health research are advised to explore options available through the NHMRC and other funding bodies, which consider applications in any area relevant to human health, or other medical and health research funding organisations.

Eligible Research

Research eligible² for ARC support:

- a) research where the aim is the fundamental understanding of biological processes not directly related to human medical and/or health interventions and outcomes (e.g. human biology not related to health); or
- b) research where the aim is the development of basic knowledge and/or technology platforms, that may have future medical and/or health applications and these are clearly specified as being outside the scope of the proposal; or
- c) research (including observational research) where the aim is to understand the normal human life cycle (e.g. infancy, childhood, adolescence and ageing) and/or traits and behaviour using human participants or populations, except if it involves a health intervention; or
- d) the use or development of equipment, facilities, tools, games, devices, smart phone applications or other items to support eligible¹ research as listed above.

Ineligible Research

Research ineligible for ARC support:

- a) research with direct medical and/or human health aims or purpose, including research on the understanding, aetiology, diagnosis, monitoring, management or treatment of physical or mental disease or other medical and/or human health conditions; or
- b) research involving the use or development of animal models of medical and/or health conditions, or the use of animals for the development or testing of diagnostic procedures or therapeutic goods (including devices), for the purpose of better understanding human medical and/or health conditions and or developing treatments for medical and/or human health conditions; or
- c) interventional research in humans, particularly clinical or pre-clinical trials of diagnostic procedures or therapeutic goods (including devices), or research aiming to modify the medical and/or human health condition or behaviour of the human participants; or
- d) the use or development of equipment, facilities, tools, games, devices, smart phone applications or other items to better understand, diagnose, monitor, manage or treat medical and/or human health conditions.

² Eligible under the ARC Medical Research Policy; other research not covered by this policy may also be eligible for ARC support.

Process

The ARC may, in its absolute discretion, seek further advice from the NHMRC, the Administering Organisation or any other relevant party when determining the eligibility of a proposal.

If the ARC determines that a proposal is at risk of not being considered by either agency (ARC or NHMRC), the ARC reserves the right to deem such a proposal eligible³ for assessment.

Recognising that an integrated research project or program may sometimes include a small element of research not supported under this policy, the ARC may, but is not obliged to, deem such a proposal eligible⁴ for assessment provided the proposal predominantly comprises eligible research as set out in this policy.

Proposals deemed ineligible cannot be recommended or approved for funding under the *Australian Research Council Act 2001*.

Contact details

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³ Subject to all other eligibility requirements set out in the relevant funding rules also being met.

⁴ *Ibid.*