

Australian Research Council (ARC) Medical Research Policy

Effective 25 August 2014, the ARC has updated this policy. It applies to ARC funding schemes as indicated in the relevant funding rules.

The ARC may fund health and medical research, either in concert with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) or directly, to address specific Australian Government health and medical research priorities, however, the ARC does not normally fund health and medical research through its competitive funding schemes.

There are research activities that potentially intersect with both ARC and NHMRC responsibilities. To provide clarity to potential applicants, this policy details the research at this juncture that would be eligible for ARC support. This is intended to reduce the likelihood of applicants preparing and submitting ineligible proposals to the ARC. The ARC remains committed to ensuring that there is no eligibility 'gap' between the two agencies (in terms of disciplines or fields of research).

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

1. Research eligible¹ for ARC support:

- a) research in bioengineering, where the goal is to advance engineering knowledge by applying engineering principles to problems that may ultimately have medical applications; or,
- b) research in the natural sciences, where the goal is the fundamental understanding of biological processes or the development of knowledge and/or technology platforms, that may ultimately have medical applications; or,
- c) research (including observational research) where the goal is the understanding of normal human life stages (e.g. infancy, childhood, adolescence and ageing) and/or traits using human participants or populations, unless 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 eligible research as listed above.

2. Research ineligible for ARC support:

- a) research with human health and/or medical goals, including research on the understanding, aetiology, diagnosis, monitoring, management or treatment of physical or mental disease or other health conditions in humans; or,
- b) research involving the use or development of animal models of human health conditions, or the use of animals for the development or testing of therapeutic goods (including devices) or procedures, for the purpose of better understanding human health or developing treatments for human health conditions; or,

¹ Eligible under the ARC Medical Research Policy; other research not covered by this policy may also be eligible for ARC support.

- c) interventional research in humans, particularly clinical or pre-clinical trials of therapeutic goods (including devices), or research aiming to modify the health of the human participants; or,
- d) the use or development of equipment, facilities, tools, games, devices, smart phone applications or other items to understand, diagnose, monitor, manage or treat human health conditions.

The ARC may seek further advice from the Office of 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 **eligible**² for assessment.

Recognising that an integrated research project or programme 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 **eligible**³ 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*.

Definitions

Disease - Any deviation or interruption of the normal structure or function of any part, organ or system (or combination thereof) of the body that is manifested by a characteristic set of symptoms and signs and whose aetiology, pathology and prognosis may be known or unknown.

Human health conditions - Pertaining to diseases (as defined above), syndromes, pathological conditions, injuries, signs, symptoms, problems and/or conditions that generally lead to contact with, or utilisation of, health services.

Intervention/al - Includes interventions designed to understand and/or change human health conditions, such as:

- clinical or pre-clinical trials in human participants;
- the collection and/or use of body organs, tissues or fluids e.g. skin, blood, urine, saliva, hair, bones, tumour and other biopsy specimens or exhaled breath;
- behavioural interventions; or
- dietary interventions.

Medical research - Includes medical and/or dental research.

Therapeutic Goods; Therapeutic use - As defined in the *Therapeutic Goods Administration Act (1989)* incorporating all updates as at the date of the publication of this policy.

² Subject to all other eligibility requirements set out in the relevant funding rules also being met.

³ *ibid.*