



**Australian Government**  
**Australian Research Council**

## **Responding to the impact of COVID-19**

### **ARC GUIDANCE – PREPARING APPLICATIONS**

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As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the ARC understands that it is a challenging time for researchers and research administrators preparing grant applications.

The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and responses are designed to provide advice to assist researchers planning applications for upcoming ARC National Competitive Grant Program (NCGP) Grant Opportunities.

While these FAQs relate to addressing some of the general impacts of COVID-19, please also visit the [ARC Grants Calendar](#) for key dates and links to [GrantConnect](#) documentation specific to each new Grant Opportunity. *Please note, while the Grant Guidelines are available to view on GrantConnect, you will need to register with GrantConnect to access all documentation.*

The ARC will continue to monitor the situation and will update our advice as required. Researchers are encouraged to contact their Research Office, should they wish to discuss their particular circumstances and options.

Research Office staff are encouraged to contact the ARC via [NCGP@arc.gov.au](mailto:NCGP@arc.gov.au) or 02 6287 6600.

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## Updated Frequently Asked Questions

### Timing of Grant Opportunities

#### **Where are the key dates for upcoming ARC Grant Opportunities advised?**

Dates of all upcoming ARC Grant Opportunities are published on the NCGP scheme timelines on the [ARC Grants Calendar](#).

#### **Will future grant opportunities be delayed, cancelled or extended due to the COVID-19 crisis?**

The ARC is continuing to progress NCGP grant application and peer review processes because an important role of the ARC is to ensure we continue to deliver funding outcomes that will support researchers in the recovery period and beyond.

The ARC is not anticipating any changes to the currently published NCGP scheme timelines on the [ARC Grants Calendar](#), as we are aiming to minimise the cumulative impact of COVID-19 on future rounds of funding.

Noting that all Grants Calendar dates published on the ARC website are indicative, should any changes arise the ARC will issue a Network Message to the sector.

### Application information

#### **Do I need to include a research contingency plan, with information about potential impacts of COVID-19 on my proposed research, within my application?**

Whilst the pandemic is ongoing and continually evolving, the ARC acknowledges that the future impacts of COVID-19 are difficult for anyone to determine. In completing ARC grant applications, the application should be accurate as at the time of submitting the application. Researchers should include a realistic plan of how their research will be undertaken. If applicable, known project specific impacts of COVID-19 can be addressed under the feasibility heading of the Project Description. However, a COVID-19 continuity plan is not required as part of the application. Where an application is successful, applicants will be required to prepare risk management plan before commencement and any changes in circumstances that affect the proposed research project will be managed as a post award issue.

#### **Can I include requests for travel both domestically and internationally in my application?**

Yes. You can still include requests for travel both domestically and international in accordance with the requirements set out in the relevant Grant Guidelines, noting the above advice that researchers should include a realistic plan of how their research will be undertaken. Where an application is successful, any changes to the proposed travel plans due to the impact of COVID-19 will be managed as a post award issue.

## Career interruptions due to COVID-19

### I was in my last year of eligibility to apply for a DECRA and COVID-19 has affected my ability to submit an application in 2020. How do I utilise the one-year extension to apply in 2021?

The ARC has implemented measures to support early and mid-career researchers and has introduced a one-year, automatic eligibility extension, for all researchers currently in their final year of eligibility for both DECRA and FT schemes in 2020.

Researchers who were in their final year of eligibility for DECRA and chose **not** to apply in 2020 (for DECRA 2022) can utilise the automatic one-year extension to apply in 2021 (for DECRA 2023).

The same eligibility extension is also available for researchers who were in their final year of eligibility for Future Fellowships and chose **not** to apply in 2020. Applicants can utilise the automatic one-year eligibility extension to apply in 2021 (for FT 2022).

Note that final year of eligibility applicants in either scheme who applied in the previous round (2020) **cannot apply** in the next round (2021). Please see the table below:

**Table 1:** Eligibility scenarios for applicants who were in their last year of eligibility in 2020\*.

Was the applicant in their Final Year of Eligibility in 2020?	Did the applicant apply for a DECRA 2022?	Did the applicant apply for a FT 2021?	How many times has the applicant submitted applications in this scheme previously?	Is the applicant eligible to apply in 2021? (DECRA 2023 or FT 2022)	Why?
Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	No	The applicant applied in their final year of eligibility in 2020 and therefore cannot also apply in 2021 using the one-year extension
No	Yes	N/A	1	Yes	The applicant can apply in this year as they were not in their final year of eligibility in 2020 and they have not previously submitted two applications in the DECRA scheme
No	Yes	N/A	2	No	The applicant cannot apply in this round as the applicant has already submitted two applications in the DECRA scheme

Was the applicant in their Final Year of Eligibility in 2020?	Did the applicant apply for a DECRA 2022?	Did the applicant apply for a FT 2021?	How many times has the applicant submitted applications in this scheme previously?	Is the applicant eligible to Apply in 2021? (DECRA 2023 or FT 2022)	Why?
Yes	N/A	Yes	N/A	No	The applicant applied in their final year of eligibility in 2020 and therefore cannot also apply in 2021 using the one-year extension
No	N/A	Yes	2	Yes	The applicant can apply in this year as they were not in their final year of eligibility in 2020 and they have not previously submitted three applications in the FT scheme
No	N/A	Yes	3	No	The applicant cannot apply in this round as the applicant has already submitted three applications in the FT scheme

\*Note the following eligibility scenarios are provided to assist potential applicants and their Research Office in determining if the one-year extension can be utilised or not. Please refer to the relevant grant guidelines for detailed information regarding eligibility.

**Will the ARC offer an automatic one-year extension to researchers who are in their final year of eligibility for the DECRA and FT schemes in 2021?**

The ARC will not be offering an automatic one-year extension in 2021 for applicants in their final year of eligibility for DECRA 2023 and FT 2022 schemes in 2021. The one-off extension was made available to assist researchers in their final year of eligibility in 2020, and the ARC has now further expanded the categories available regarding significant career interruptions to also include extensions to the eligibility period (see next question).

**Can a DECRA 2023 or a FT 2022 applicant be granted an extension to the eligibility period due to significant career interruption from COVID-19?**

Categories for career interruptions that can be selected for the purpose of an eligibility extension have been expanded in both the DECRA 2023 and FT 2022 application forms to include:

- Disaster management and recovery
- Limited or no access to facilities and resources

The Instructions to Applicants provide specific advice that if a DECRA or FT candidate has had a significant career interruption, including due to the impact of COVID-19, they will need to seek an extension to the eligibility period through their Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) or equivalent.

**COVID-19 has affected my academic record. Is this considered a career interruption as part of the Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) – Career Interruptions?**

Yes. The Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) assessment criterion allows inclusion and consideration of any career interruption, which has affected a researcher’s ability to undertake and contribute to research.

Career interruptions arising from COVID-19 can be included under ROPE for consideration by assessors. The Instructions to Applicants provide specific advice on how to enter this in the application.

## Financial impacts of COVID-19

**Will the minimum level of required cash and/or in-kind contributions by Administering Organisations and Participating Organisations be reduced for upcoming Linkage Program Grant Opportunities?**

No. All requirements of the current Grant Guidelines must continue to be met, including for some ARC schemes minimum cash and/or in-kind contributions from the Administering Organisation and/or Participating Organisations. A key feature of the schemes of the Linkage Program are the partnerships that are formed, which is in part signified by the level of cash and in-kind contributions pledged by Participating Organisations. For example, minimum cash contribution requirements of Partner Organisations on a Linkage Project application.

However, the ARC understands that the level of co-contribution pledged above and beyond the minimum threshold is likely to be reduced in future applications due to the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**What are the expectations for non-mandated contributions in applications submitted for upcoming Grant Opportunities?**

For those schemes where Grant Guidelines do not require minimum co-contributions by participating organisations, the ARC also understands that the level of cash and/or in-kind contributions pledged by Administering Organisations and other Participating Organisations to show support for a proposed research project are likely to be reduced in future applications due to the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Noting that Administering Organisations still need to take in account the feasibility of the proposed research project if there are reduced contributions.

ARC assessors will be instructed that they should not make assumptions about an Administering Organisation’s level of commitment and support of an application solely based on lower levels of pledged additional cash and/or in-kind support than historically provided.

### **Can existing salary from my university be used as an in-kind contribution on a Discovery Early Career Research Award (DECRA) or a Future Fellowship (FT) application?**

You can repurpose your existing salary provided by your Administering Organisation, where these funds are not existing ARC funds, and where the funds are being used to pay for something for the project that the University is already paying for – such as part salary for a Research Assistant. Repurposed salary funds could also be a cash contribution if the injected funds are provided as cash to the project.

Please be advised, only cash contributions from the Administering Organisation may be entered into the budget table. If applicable, any in-kind contributions from the Administering Organisation may be referred to in the letter of support.

## Logistics support for Antarctic research

### **What logistics advice should I seek if my proposed research project includes Antarctic research?**

If your proposed research project includes Antarctic research that will require logistical support, please contact the [Australian Antarctic Division](#) for advice about available logistical support prior to submitting your application.

## Assessment of applications

### **How will my application be assessed in relation to COVID-19 impacts on the proposed research project?**

Assessment of applications will continue in accordance with ARC's [peer review processes](#). ARC assessors will be instructed to assess all applications based on the content of the application only and not make assumptions about the viability of a proposed research project due to the potential impacts of COVID-19. Where an application is successful, applicants will be required to prepare a risk management plan before commencement and any changes in circumstances that affect the proposed research project will be managed as a post award issue.