



Australian Government

Australian Research Council

ARC RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY AND PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE (ROPE) STATEMENT

February 2014

1. CONTEXT

The ARC is committed to ensuring all eligible researchers have fair access to competitive funding through the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP). To this end, we promote and encourage within NCGP those approaches that best recognise research excellence in the context of the diversity of career and life experiences. One key element is that the assessment process takes into account the quality rather than simply the volume or size of the research contribution.

2. PRINCIPLES

The quality of Investigators involved in Proposals for funding under the NCGP (who meet the eligibility criteria) will be assessed on the basis of their **Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence** (ROPE), and other scheme dependent criteria.

ROPE was first introduced under the *Discovery Projects* scheme of the NCGP for funding commencing in 2011 and subsequently under all other schemes. It replaced the selection criterion of ‘track record relative to opportunities’. ROPE was introduced to help provide a more realistic consideration of a researcher’s capabilities and assist those who have had career interruptions for family and other reasons.

ROPE aims to ensure the assessment processes accurately evaluate an Investigator’s career history relative to their current career stage, and considers whether their productivity and contribution is commensurate with the opportunities that have been available to them.

ROPE provides a framework within which the quality and benefit of achievements is given more weight than the quantity or rate of particular achievements. It considers working arrangements, career histories and personal circumstances and provides an acknowledgement of research performance given the opportunities available.

Research Opportunity is designed to provide assessors with an accurate appreciation of career history against a timeline of years since graduation from highest educational qualification. Assessors will recognise research opportunities and experience in the context of employment situations including those outside academia and the research component of employment conditions. Periods of unemployment, or any career interruptions for child birth, carers’ responsibilities, misadventure, or debilitating illness will be taken into account. Access to research mentoring and other research support facilities and any other relevant aspects of career experience or opportunities for research will complete the considerations.

Performance Evidence is designed to provide assessors with information that will enable them to contextualise research outputs relative to the opportunity of a participant. Both research output assessment and contextualising within disciplinary expectations of research impact¹ are required. In addition to standard academic publications, research outputs can include grey literature, consultancy reports or reviews, patents and policy advice, competitive grants and other research support, higher degree student completions, major exhibitions, compositions or performances, plant breeding rights, registered designs, invited keynote and speaker addresses and other professional activities and contributions to the research field.

¹ <http://www.arc.gov.au/general/impact.htm>

3. IMPLEMENTATION

The required components of ROPE may vary between funding schemes, reflecting the differing career stage of researchers applying. Investigators should refer to the relevant scheme *Instructions to Applicants* document for further information.

The ARC funds research across all disciplines through the NCGP and there is an expectation that each Investigator on an ARC proposal will contextualise their career opportunities and achievements within discipline expectations. Therefore the ARC does not provide sample Investigator profiles.

3.1 Overview

In all schemes, some or all of the following components of ROPE are assessed:

Research Opportunity

- Details on career and opportunities for research and other relevant experience.

Performance Evidence

- Recent significant research outputs (and ARC grants)
- Ten career-best research outputs
- Further evidence in relation to research impact and contributions to the field
- Most significant contributions to the research field of the Proposal.

The *Australian Laureate Fellowships* scheme includes three additional unique components which relate to Performance Evidence:

- Evidence for and/or potential to undertake ground breaking research
- Leadership ability and plans to build world class research capacity and diverse teams
- Potential to create an enduring legacy.

The *Industrial Transformation Research Program (ITRP)* also includes up to three additional unique components which relate to Performance Evidence:

- Evidence of experience in management of collaborative industrial and end-user focussed research
- Most significant outcomes on industry-related projects
- Evidence of capacity to provide effective supervision, support and mentoring for higher degrees by research candidates and postdoctoral fellows.

3.2 Research opportunity

The ARC considers that Research Opportunity comprises two separate elements:

- Career experiences (relative to opportunity)
- Career interruptions

There are many ways to capture this information and the details below outline some of the key considerations. Investigators should refer to scheme-specific *Instructions to Applicants*.

In all schemes, for the purposes of ROPE, Investigators should provide a brief description of career circumstances which may have positively or negatively influenced their research productivity, for example:

- The number of years since graduation with highest educational qualification
- The opportunities for research in the context of:
 - employment situations, including those outside academia
 - the research component of employment conditions
 - any periods of unemployment, part-time employment or other interruptions
 - childbirth, carers' responsibilities, misadventure or debilitating illness
- If university-based, whether the Investigator is contractually a research-only, teaching and research, teaching-only, teaching and administration, research and administration, administration-only academic, researcher in business, program or project manager or other business role, giving any additional information (for example, part-time status) needed to understand the employment situation. The description should indicate the percentage of current role in each of these areas, as well as the percentage of time spent over the past ten years in these roles
- If industry-based, whether the Investigator's role is industry, research and administration, research in business, program or project manager or other business role, giving any additional information (for example, part-time status) needed to understand the employment situation. The description should indicate the percentage of current role in each of these areas, as well as the percentage of time spent over the past ten years in these roles
- The research mentoring and research support facilities available to the Investigator
- Any other aspects of career or opportunities for research that are relevant to assessment and that have not been detailed elsewhere in this Proposal (for example, any circumstances that may have limited research and publications or affected the time available to conduct and publish their research)

Investigators should provide a total FTE for periods of unemployment, part time employment or interruptions for childbirth, carers' responsibilities, misadventure or debilitating illness.

3.3 Performance evidence

The ARC considers that evidence of performance can be articulated in a combination of ways, including, but not limited to:

- Recent significant research outputs – a list of outputs split into five categories (over a particular number of years):
 - (i) scholarly books
 - (ii) scholarly book chapters
 - (iii) refereed journal articles
 - (iv) refereed conference papers only when the paper was published in full in the proceedings
 - (v) other (for example, major exhibitions, compositions or performance).
- ARC grants awarded as a Chief Investigator, Partner Investigator, Fellow or Awardee (over a particular number of years).

- Ten career-best research outputs – full reference and statement (30 words) explaining and justifying the impact or significance of the output.
- Most significant contributions to the research field of this Proposal. A statement of how the Investigator’s research has led to a significant change or advancement of knowledge in their field, and an outline of how these achievements will contribute to the proposal.
- Further evidence in relation to research impact and contributions to the field (over a particular number of years) – including, but not limited to:
 - (i) Research outputs other than academic publications where other research outputs might include patents, IP licences, plant breeding rights, registered designs, other research support income, relevant consultancies, policy advice and other professional activities; and
 - (ii) Description of research impact relative to opportunity and in the context of discipline/end user benefits.

4. ELIGIBILITY

For those NCGP schemes in which periods of career interruption for Investigators are assessed for eligibility purposes, any career interruptions should be described in accordance with the specific definition provided within the relevant Funding Rules and *Instructions to Applicants*.