Australian Government
Australian Research Council

Detailed Assessor Handbook

A guide for **Detailed** Assessors on the selection process and assessing of applications under the Discovery Program grant opportunities for

Discovery Projects – DP26

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Contents

1. Overview

This Handbook provides instructions and advice for **Detailed Assessors** on the assessment process for:

1. Discovery Projects (DP)

This scheme is part of the Discovery Program of the Australian Research Council's (ARC) National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP). Please note that this Handbook pertains to the assessment of Discovery Project Full Applications only.

The Discovery Program's schemes support the highest-quality fundamental and applied research and research training and provides research support for early, mid-career, senior researchers, and research teams.

The specific objectives and assessment criteria for the grant opportunity covered in the Handbook is listed in the Appendix, and is also available in the Grant Guidelines on GrantConnect.

2. The assessment process

Peer review is the method used to assess ARC applications and is undertaken by 2 groups of experts known as General and Detailed Assessors. Experts from each group assess applications against the relevant grant opportunity assessment criteria and contribute to the process of scoring and ranking research applications. Detailed Assessors' comments should be useful for both General Assessors and applicants. Detailed Assessors' comments and scores are considered by General Assessors as part of their assessment of applications, while Detailed Assessors' comments are treated in applicants' rejoinders. The objective of the assessment process is to ensure that the highest quality research applications are recommended to the Accountable Authority for funding. The ARC Board is the Accountable Authority for the three Discovery Program schemes. The ARC Board will decide which grants to fund, after considering the advice from peer review, and alignment with Australian Government priorities (refer to sections 8.9 – 8.11 of the Discovery Program Grant Guidelines – Discovery Projects (2024 edition).

The Research Management System (RMS) is an online system used for the preparation and submission of research applications, assessments and rejoinders for the ARC. The *RMS User Guide for Assessors***,** as well as guides for **General** and **Detailed** Assessors to navigate the RMS assignment and assessment process, are available on the ARC Assessor Resources page. Here, assessors can also find additional information about the peer review process.

General and Detailed Assessors have different roles in the peer review process. Key aspects of Detailed Assessors role are outlined in Sections 2.1

Detailed Assessors' expertise, comments and scores are made available to General Assessors for consideration as part of application assessment.

Detailed Assessors' comments are anonymously made available to Applicants once a scheme opens for rejoinders. Assessor comments, scores and ranks will be anonymously made available to eligible applicants once grant outcomes are announced in RMS. Detailed Assessors should keep in mind the importance of aligning their scores and comments so that at the rejoinder stage applicants have a clear sense of issues they need to address. Similarly, if applicants are unsuccessful the correlation between scores and comments can assist applicants to identify areas for improvement in potential resubmissions to the scheme.

2.1 Detailed Assessors

RMS profile

A Detailed Assessor's RMS profile plays an essential role in the assignment process as information contained in the profile assists with the matching of applications with appropriately skilled Detailed Assessors. It is important that Detailed Assessors ensure that their RMS profile is up-to-date and contains the following details:

1. **Expertise text:** Please outline your expertise briefly. The following format is suggested "My major area of research expertise is in a, b, c. I have additional research experience in q, r, s. I would also be able to assess in the areas of x, y, z. The research facilities, techniques and methodologies I use are l, m, n".
2. **Field of Research (FoR-2020) Codes:** Please include between 6 and 10 FoR codes at the 6-digit level that reflect your key areas of expertise.
3. **Employment History:** Please ensure that your employment history is kept up to date, to enable your organisational conflicts of interests to be identified by RMS.
4. **Personal Details:** Please ensure your personal details are up to date, including conflicts of interest and personal material interest declarations.

This information will be used to match assessors with applications and should accurately represent your research expertise.

Note: Obligated assessors (those who are participants on an ARC project currently receiving funding) are required to keep their RMS profile up to date and to undertake assessments as required in the relevant Commonwealth grant agreement for their project(s).

Assignment of applications

Applications are assigned to Detailed Assessors using information from their RMS profile and expert judgement by:

1. a Carriage 1, the lead General Assessor on the Selection Advisory Committee (SAC) for a specific grant opportunity; and/or
2. an ARC Executive Director.

Detailed assessments

Detailed Assessors provide scores and written comments addressing the assessment criteria on each application and may be assigned a number of applications within their field of research or across a broader disciplinary area on the basis of their RMS profile expertise text and FoR codes. Detailed Assessors are asked to:

a. Complete in-depth assessments of applications in RMS, providing scores and detailed comments against grant opportunity specific criteria (refer to the Appendix for Discovery Program grant opportunities)
b. Identify the merits or otherwise of the application with respect to the assessment criteria set out in the grant guidelines
c. Assess and score the application for each assessment criterion separately.

If a Detailed Assessor identifies a conflict of interest (COI) with an assigned application this must be declared to the ARC by rejecting the assignment in RMS and no further participation in the assessment process for that application should take place. If a Detailed Assessor is unsure of whether a COI exists, they must seek advice from the ARC before proceeding with accepting an assignment by emailing ARC-Peer_Review@arc.gov.au as soon as possible. Further information and policies about a COI are in Section 3.1.

Detailed Assessors are asked to provide a minimum of 500 characters (approximately 75 words) for each assessment criterion and a minimum of 3,500 characters (approximately 525 words) for the overall assessment.

Detailed Assessors may receive applications to assess at any stage of the assessment process due to late COIs being declared by other assessors.

How to ensure high quality detailed assessments

Detailed Assessors can refer to the ARC Peer Review webpage for **examples** of well-written detailed assessments. The webpage also provides links to 2 supplementary guides, the *Peer Review* and *Disclosure of Interests and Management of Conflicts of Interest*, which support implementation of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (the Code).

High quality detailed assessments are crucial for the integrity of the peer review process. As General Assessors may not be an expert in the specific field of an application but are likely to have expertise in the general field of the proposed research, Detailed Assessors' scores that are justified with constructive comments help General Assessors assess the merit of an application. Similarly, Detailed Assessors' comments enable applicants to address potential criticisms in their rejoinders.

Detailed Assessors are asked to provide detailed high quality, constructive assessments with the following elements:

1. **Objective** and professional comments.
2. **Detailed** comments on the merits or otherwise of the application with respect to the assessment criteria.
3. **Sufficient** information to allow applicants to provide a rejoinder addressing assessor comments about the application, and to allow non-disciplinary expert General Assessors to evaluate the merit of the application (1 or 2 sentences is not sufficient, a clear explanation of why it is excellent or why the assessor considers there is an issue with the project is required.)
4. **Comments that align closely with scores**—for example, an 'A' score should not be submitted if an application is assessed as being of limited merit against a criterion. If a 'D' score is given, then suitable constructive criticisms and comments justifying the score are required. It is important to remember that applicants only see the comments at the rejoinder stage and the SAC will see both comments and scores. It is essential that your scores and comments are fit for purpose and provide appropriate information for the person using them.
5. **Comments that are fair, meaningful and balanced**, addressing only issues relevant to the application in terms of the assessment criteria. Comments should provide a sound, comprehensive account of, and justification for, views about the application, while respecting the care with which applications have been prepared.
6. **Comments that are free** from platitudes, exaggeration or understatement.
7. **Timely submission** via RMS as early as possible is appreciated, and by the ARC deadline is required.

How to avoid inappropriate assessments

Detailed Assessors **should not** put the following in their assessment comments, as this may render the assessment inappropriate:

1. Scores which do not align with assessment text.
2. Excessive use of acronyms.
3. Generic comments used in multiple assessments.
4. Very brief assessment text.
5. Scores that are included within the assessment text.
6. Information that identifies researchers named on other applications.
7. Advice about their own identity, standing in, or understanding of, the research field covered in the application.
8. The outcome or status of relevant research by the Chief Investigators and/or Partner Investigators which is not mentioned by the applicants in the application, unless it contradicts the supplied information, and comments about the potential ineligibility of an application. All queries regarding outcomes of relevant research not mentioned in the application and eligibility should be sent to ARC-Peer_Review@arc.gov.au as soon as a potential issue is identified.
9. Restatement or rephrasing of any part of the application.
10. Comments comparing one application with another in this round or in any other round.
11. Text that has been copied from a previous assessment.
12. Text that appears to be discriminatory, defamatory or distastefully irrelevant (such as gratuitous criticism of a researcher and/or eligible organisation).
13. Text that appears to be judging a National Interest Test (NIT) statement, for example, suggesting that a NIT is satisfactory or needs revision. An assessor may, however, refer to information provided in a NIT in their comments when justifying the rationale for their assessment.
14. Text or comments produced by the use of generative Artificial Intelligence technology.

Under no circumstances should Detailed Assessors contact researchers and/or institutions about a submitted application or seek additional information from any sources.

When assessing applications Detailed Assessors must rely solely on the information provided within the application including referenced publications and preprints and should not seek additional information from any sources. This includes following any hyperlinks that may have been provided in the application. The inclusion of webpage addresses/URLs and hyperlinks is only permitted under certain circumstances such as publications (including preprints) that are only available online and Letters of Support. Webpage addresses/URLs and hyperlinks should not be used to circumvent page limits, nor should they provide information that is not contained in the application. All information relevant to the application must be contained within the application.

Treatment of inappropriate assessments

Inappropriate assessments compromise the integrity of the peer review process. To be fair to all applicants, the ARC may review and reject assessments with inappropriate or highly subjective comments from Detailed Assessors about any aspect of the application. If General Assessors are concerned about the appropriateness of any assessment text or comments that do not match scores from Detailed Assessors, or identify a potential COI, they will contact the ARC. The ARC will then investigate the concerns and decide whether an assessment should be amended by the Detailed Assessor or removed from the process. The latter happens only in rare circumstances and requires ARC Senior Executive approval.

If inappropriate assessments are identified early in the assessment process by the ARC or the applicant during the rejoinder stage, the ARC may ask the Detailed Assessor to amend their assessment to the application or consider removal of an assessment as above.

The ARC website contains information for applicants advising how to request that the ARC review an assessment that contains inappropriate elements during the rejoinder period.

2.2 Scoring, ranking and submitting assessments

Scoring

When applying the Scoring Matrix, Assessors should have regard for the specific grant opportunity objectives (see Appendix).

Scoring applications against assessment criteria can be a difficult exercise when Assessors might only look at a small sub-set of applications. Bands within the Scoring Matrix ideally represent a distribution across all applications submitted to a grant opportunity.

While the applications that you are assessing have been shortlisted through a competitive process, only the very best applications should be recommended for funding. As a guide, approximately 10% should fall into the top scoring band ('A'). These would have been assessed as near flawless applications across all assessment criteria.

A Scoring Matrix for the scores A to E is provided in Table 1 below and should guide scoring for Detailed Assessors for the Discovery Projects Full Application stage.

Table 1: Example Scoring Matrix

Score	Criteria	Recommendation
A	**Outstanding:** Of the highest quality and at the forefront of research in the field. Approximately 10% of applications should receive scores in this band.	**Recommended unconditionally**
B	**Excellent:** Of high quality and strongly competitive. Approximately 15% of applications should receive scores in this band.	**Strongly support recommendation of funding**
C	**Very Good:** Interesting, sound and compelling. Approximately 20% of applications should receive scores in this band.	**Support recommendation of funding**
D	**Good:** Sound but lacks a compelling element. Approximately 35% of applications are likely to fall into this band.	**Support recommendation of funding with reservation**
E	**Uncompetitive:** Uncompetitive and has significant weaknesses. Approximately 20% of applications are likely to fall into this band.	**Not recommended for funding**

Ranking

Each application must have a unique rank. Although RMS will use the **overall application scores** to automatically rank an Assessor's assessments as these are completed in RMS, if multiple applications have the same **overall application scores** these applications will be flagged and an Assessor must assign a unique rank to differentiate equally scored applications. Differentiation should be based on how you compare the applications in relation to the Scoring Matrix.

Note: RMS will use your scores to automatically rank applications, and then use your rank order to differentiate equally scored applications.

Assessments should be submitted when all applications have been assigned 1) a score and 2) a unique ranking.

2.3 Important factors to consider when assessing

Objectives and assessment criteria

Each grant opportunity has specific objectives and assessment criteria. Assessors must have regard to both the objectives and the assessment criteria as outlined in the relevant Grant Guidelines and the Appendix of this document.

To reduce duplication, the Application Form for Discovery Projects has been streamlined. When a question from the assessment criteria is already covered in multiple sections of the application form, it has been removed as a separate heading in the Project Description question. Assessors should be aware that the 'Investigator/Capability' criteria and 'Feasibility' criteria are no longer separate headings in the Project Description.

Important: Some questions in Parts A and B of the application have been locked and carried through from the Expression of Interest Application stage, precluding the addition or amendment of participating organisations and employment details. If applicable, details of non-lead CI and/or PI changes to employment circumstances between the EOI and Full Application stage may be included under Question C1 'Project Description', Question C2 'Capability Statement', and Question D3 'Details of non-ARC contributions as per 3.1 of the DP26 FAQ.

Similarly, contributions from an organisation not listed in the original EOI may be added to the Budget in Question D3 (non-ARC contributions), though they will not appear in the Budget table (see DP26 FAQ, s. 2.5).

In the rare circumstance that a participant (non-lead Chief Investigator) passes away between the EOI and Full Application stage, the ARC may approve their removal from the project to enable submission of the Full Application form. The deceased investigator's organisation will remain in Question A3 'Organisation Participation Summary' as an Other Organisation. It will also be listed in D1 'Proposed Budget'. Depending on the Organisation's involvement in the project, Question C1 'Project Description', Question D1 'Proposed Budget' and Question D3 'Details of non-ARC contributions may include information about the organisation's participation, or it may be left blank.

National Interest Test (NIT)

Applicants must provide a separate response on the national interest of their research proposal, which is provided with other elements of an application recommended for funding for final consideration by the ARC Board.

The NIT statement provided by the researcher is part of their application, will be certified by the DVCR and will be available to all assessors. It should be considered as part of the assessment of the application. The National Interest Test is to be used with the rest of the information in the application to inform an assessor's assessment of the Assessment Criteria as included in the Appendix.

The ARC will accept the DVCR's certification as final and will not review or make requests for changes to a NIT. Additional information regarding the National Interest Test is available on the ARC Website.

Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE)

The ROPE assessment criterion requires all Assessors to identify and consider research excellence relative to a researcher's career and opportunities for research. It aims to ensure that NCGP assessment processes accurately evaluate a researcher's career history relative to their current career stage and consider whether their productivity and contribution is commensurate with the opportunities that have been available to them.

The required elements of ROPE vary according to the objectives of each grant opportunity. All General and Detailed Assessors should be familiar with the full ROPE statement located on the ARC website.

Interdisciplinary research

The ARC recognises the value of interdisciplinary research and the ARC's commitment to supporting interdisciplinary research is outlined in the *ARC Statement of Support for Interdisciplinary Research*.

Interdisciplinary research can be a distinct mode of research, or a combination of researchers, knowledge and/or approaches from disparate disciplines. Under the NCGP, examples of interdisciplinary research may include researchers from different disciplines working together in a team; researchers collaborating to bring different perspectives to solve a problem; researchers utilising methods normally associated with one or more disciplines to solve problems in another discipline; and one or more researchers translating innovative blue sky or applied research outcomes from one discipline into an entirely different research discipline.

Assessors are required to assess all research on a fair and equal basis, including applications and outputs involving interdisciplinary and collaborative research. To assist with this, the ARC facilitates consideration of applications by relevant General Assessors with interdisciplinary expertise or where not feasible, applications are allocated to General Assessors who have broad disciplinary expertise regardless of

discipline grouping. Interdisciplinary applications should be allocated to Detailed Assessors with specific interdisciplinary expertise or to Detailed Assessors from the different disciplines covered in the application.

Preprints or comparable resources

Detailed Assessors should consider the merit of publications including preprints and comparable resources that are listed in the application. Assessors may access hyperlinks and evaluate if a citation included in the application is a crucial part of the research discourse, and evaluate the suitability, quality and relevance of the research output to help them determine the quality and novelty of the proposed research. However, Assessors should not use online search engines to identify or evaluate applicants' publications that are not included within the application.

Preprints or comparable resources can be included in any part of an application. This includes within the Research Outputs list and the body of an application. An application will not be deemed to be ineligible for the citing and listing of preprints or comparable resources.

A preprint or comparable resource is a scholarly output that is uploaded by the authors to a recognised publicly accessible archive, repository, or preprint service (such as, but not limited to, arXiv, bioRxiv, medRxiv, ChemRxiv, Peer J Preprints, Zenodo, GitHub, PsyArXiv and publicly available university of government repositories etc.). This will include a range of materials that have been subjected to varying degrees of peer review from none to light and full review. Ideally, a preprint or comparable resource should have a unique identifier or a DOI (digital object identifier). Any citation of a preprint or comparable resource should be explicitly identified as such and listed in the references with a DOI, URL or equivalent, version number and/or date of access, as applicable.

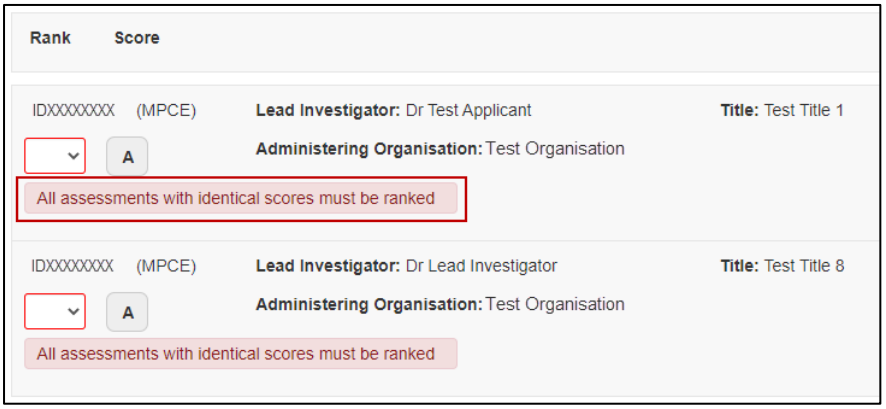
Inclusion of preprints or comparable resources within the body of the application should comply with standard disciplinary practices for the relevant field.

Notes(s): The ARC is currently aware of an RMS issue where questions not applicable to Partner Investigators (B10-B15) still render to the PDF version of the application form as blank. For assessment purposes, please disregard these unfilled fields which are not applicable to Partner Investigators.

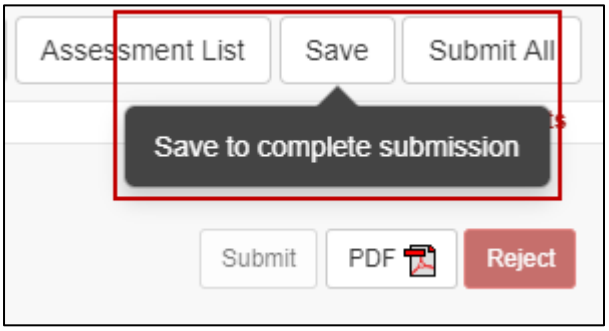
How to submit detailed assessments

If a Detailed Assessor has been assigned multiple applications, RMS will use the **overall application scores** to automatically rank a Detailed Assessor's assessments as these are completed in RMS. Where multiple applications have the same **overall application scores** these applications will be flagged and a Detailed Assessor must assign a unique rank to differentiate equally scored applications.

Once the unique rank is assigned the error message will disappear and the assessments can be submitted.



If assessments have not been submitted individually the 'Submit All' button will activate at the top right of the screen once all unsubmitted assessments have reached the minimum system requirements.



To submit all completed assessments, select 'Submit All' and then 'Save' to complete submission.

Note: Once assessments have been submitted a Detailed Assessor will not be able to amend the details, and the 'Submit' button will be greyed out. If you need to change an assessment please email ARC-Peer_Review@arc.gov.au before the assessment closing date to have the assessment 'de-submitted'. For further details regarding completing and submitting assessment in RMS refer to *RMS User Guide for Assessors* available on the ARC Assessor Resources page.

3. Ensuring integrity of process

3.1 Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest (COI)

The *ARC Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy* is designed to ensure that all COIs are managed in a rigorous and transparent way. It aims to prevent individuals from influencing decisions unfairly and to maintain public confidence in the integrity, legitimacy, impartiality and fairness of the peer review process.

Any individual who is reviewing material for the ARC must agree to comply with the confidentiality and COI statement and must clearly disclose any material personal interests that may affect, or might be perceived to affect, their ability to perform their role.

All Assessors must maintain an up-to-date RMS profile, including personal details, current employment details and previous employment history within the past 2 years. This information will assist the ARC with the identification and management of organisational conflicts of interest.

Assessors reviewing ARC grant applications who have identified a conflict of interest must reject the grant application assigned in RMS to assist the ARC in the management of conflicts of interest.

Examples of material personal interests that are considered by the ARC to be COIs include holding funding with a named participant within the past 2 years or having been a collaborator or co-author with a named participant on a research output within the last 4 years. For more information on disclosure of COIs, including

material personal interest declarations, please refer to the *Identifying and Handling a Conflict of Interest in NCGP processes* document.

Note: In RMS, Assessors will be asked to indicate their willingness to comply with this policy before proceeding to assess. They can do this by selecting the 'Accept' button.

Extract from the ARC Policy on Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in the ARC's grants programs (July 2023):

The ARC Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy (2020) requires that all officials and individuals carrying out ARC business, including assessors and peer reviewers, are required to preserve the principles of confidentiality outlined in the policy. **Release of material into generative AI tools constitutes a breach of confidentiality and peer reviewers, including all Detailed and General Assessors, must not use generative AI as part of their assessment activities**.

Assessors are asked to provide detailed high quality, constructive assessments that assist the Selection Advisory Committees to assess the merits of an application. The use of generative AI may compromise the integrity of the ARC's peer review process by, for example, producing text that contains inappropriate content, such as generic comments and restatements of the application.

3.2 Research integrity and research misconduct

If in the course of undertaking an assessment you identify or suspect a potential research integrity breach or research misconduct, please notify the ARC Research Integrity Office (researchintegrity@arc.gov.au) in accordance with Section 5 of the ARC Research Integrity Policy. Please do not mention your concerns in any assessment comments.

The ARC Research Integrity Office will consider whether to refer your concerns to the relevant institution for investigation in accordance with the requirements of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2018)*. You should provide sufficient information to allow the ARC to assess whether there is a basis for referring the matter to the institution and to enable the relevant institution to progress an investigation into the allegation (if required).

Foreign financial support, foreign affiliations and foreign honorary positions. Participants applying for ARC grants are required to answer questions in their application relating to foreign financial support and foreign affiliations, including current and previous associations. Participants are required to declare:

- foreign financial support (cash or in kind) for research related activities
- current or past associations or affiliations with a foreign sponsored talent program (for the last 10 years)
- current associations or affiliations with a foreign government, foreign political party, foreign state-owned enterprise, foreign military and/or foreign police organisations

If in the course of undertaking an assessment you identify or suspect a potential issue of foreign interference, please send an email highlighting your concerns to the ARC via ARC-College@arc.gov.au (General Assessors) or ARC-Peer_Review@arc.gov.au (Detailed Assessors) as soon as possible.

Note: In RMS, Assessors will be asked to indicate their willingness to comply with this policy before proceeding to assess. They can do this by selecting the 'Accept' button.

3.3 Applications outside an Assessor's area of expertise

If you are a **Detailed Assessor** and believe that the ARC has misunderstood your expertise or has made an error in assigning an application to you, please give **early notice** of your view by rejecting the application/s in RMS and entering a reason in the 'Reject Reason' comment box. It is also important to review your RMS profile expertise text and FoR codes.

3.4 Eligibility

If, while assessing an application, you have concerns about eligibility, ethics or other issues associated with an application, **you must not include this information in your assessment**. Please send an email highlighting your concerns to ARC-Peer_Review@arc.gov.au as soon as possible. The ARC is responsible

for investigating and making decisions on these matters, and Detailed Assessors should not conduct investigations at any point. Please complete your assessment based on the merits of the application without giving consideration to the potential eligibility issue.

3.5 Unconscious bias

Detailed Assessors should also be aware of how their unconscious bias could affect the peer review process.

Unconscious biases are pervasive and may relate to perceptions about a range of attributes including:

1. gender and/or sexuality
2. social/cultural background
3. career path
4. institutional employer
5. discipline

The ARC encourages Assessors to recognise their own biases and be aware of them in their assessments. A selection of short, online tests for identifying unconscious biases is available via Harvard University's 'Implicit Social Attitudes' demonstration sites.

4. Contact details for queries during the assessment process

For **all** assignment and assessment, as well as accessibility enquiries, please email **the relevant scheme team via** ARC-Peer_Review@arc.gov.au

Appendix: Discovery Program Scoring Matrix and assessment criteria considerations

Please note: Detailed Assessors assign a score and do not have to consider the weighting of a criterion as this is applied automatically within RMS. The table below provide ready access to assessment criteria set out in the *Discovery Program Grant Guidelines – Discovery Projects (2024 edition)* (available on GrantConnect) and the Scoring Matrixes outlined in this handbook. Detailed Assessors should use their judgement and experience to assess the appropriate score within the context of the relevant discipline.

Discovery Projects Full Application Stage (DP26)

Key Dates and Notes

Detailed Assessors

Task	DP26 Dates	Detail
Assessment Period	12 May 2025 – 17 June 2025	Check the application details for any Conflict of Interest as soon as the Research Management System (RMS) email containing assignments has been received; then accept or reject assignments in RMS (to allow for timely re-assignment of the rejected assignments). Assess each application assigned using an A-E rating scale and give a written report against the assessment criteria. Submit assessments to the ARC on or before this deadline date.

Grant Guidelines

The objectives and assessment criteria below are from the *Discovery Program Grant Guidelines - (2024 edition): Discovery Projects* which are available on GrantConnect.

Overview

The Discovery Projects scheme provides grant funding to support research projects that may be undertaken by individual researchers or research teams.

Objectives

The objectives of the **Discovery Projects** grant opportunity are to:

a. support excellent pure basic, strategic basic and applied research, and research training, across all disciplines excluding clinical and other medical research, that addresses a significant problem or gap in knowledge and represents value for money;
b. expand research capacity in Australia by supporting excellent researchers and teams;
c. foster national and international research collaboration;
d. create new knowledge with economic, commercial, environmental, social and/or cultural benefits for Australia; and
e. enhance the scale and focus of research in Australian Government priority areas.

Assessment criteria and Scoring Matrix – Discovery Projects (Full Application Stage)

Assessment criterion	(A) **Outstanding** Of the highest quality and at the forefront of research in the field. Approximately 10% of applications should receive scores in this band.	(B) **Excellent** Of high quality and strongly competitive. Approximately 15% of applications should receive scores in this band.	(C) **Very Good** Interesting, sound and compelling. Approximately 20% of applications should receive scores in this band.	(D) **Good** Sound, but lacks a compelling element. Approximately 35% of applications are likely to fall into this band.	(E) **Uncompetitive** Has significant weaknesses. Approximately 20% of applications are likely to fall into this band.

Assessment criteria and weightings	**Assessment criteria details**
Investigator/Capability 30%	Taking into account research opportunity, ▪ record of high-quality research outputs appropriate to the discipline ▪ evidence of excellence in research training, mentoring and supervision (where appropriate); and ▪ the capability of the investigator or team to build collaborations both within Australia and internationally.
Project Quality and Innovation 45%	▪ contribution to an important gap in knowledge or significant problem; ▪ novelty/originality and innovation of the proposed research (including any new methods, technologies, theories or ideas that will be developed); ▪ clarity of the hypothesis, theories and research questions; ▪ cohesiveness of the project design and implementation plan (including the appropriateness of the aim, conceptual framework, method, data and/or analyses); and ▪ extent to which the research has the potential to enhance international collaboration. <u>If the project involves Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander research additional criteria include:</u> ▪ the project's level of collaboration, engagement, relationship building and benefit sharing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and First Nations Organisations and Communities; ▪ the project's strategy and mechanisms for Indigenous research capacity building within the project; ▪ the project's level of internal leadership of Indigenous research;

Assessment criteria and weightings	Assessment criteria details
	▪ the project's adherence to the Australian Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles; and ▪ the project's understanding of, and proposed strategies to adhere to, the AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research and NHMRC's guidelines on Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities.
Benefit 15%	Describe the potential benefits including the: ▪ new or advanced knowledge resulting from outcomes of the research; ▪ economic, commercial, environmental, social and/or cultural benefits for Australia; and ▪ potential contribution to Australian Government priority areas.
Feasibility 10%	Describe the: ▪ cost-effectiveness of the research and its value for money; ▪ time and capacity of investigator or team to undertake research; ▪ suitability of the environment for the research team and their project, and for HDR students where appropriate; ▪ availability of the necessary facilities to complete the project; and ▪ extent to which the project's design, named participants and requested budget create confidence in the timely and successful completion of the project.